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A YEAR IN PESHAWUR,

AND A

Lady's Ride into the Khyber Pass.

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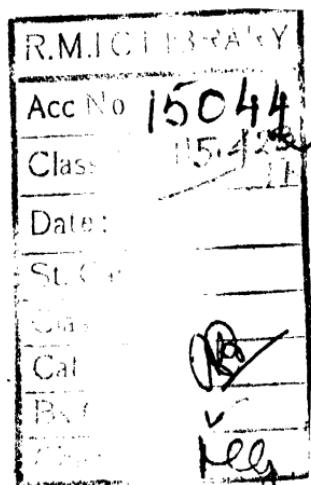
BY

L. R. TREVELYAN.

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W.H.

Dedicated

TO

MY HUSBAND.

P R E F A C E.

THIS story is written by one who has lived in the country in which the scene is laid, and is intended to give some idea of the life led by officers and their families in a station like Peshawur. To enliven the scenes, it has been necessary to people them ; but it has been the writer's studious care that her fictitious characters shall be typical, and in no case to risk offence by drawing from life. During the interval between the composition and the publication of this work, many changes have taken place in Afghanistan, but they do not in any way affect "A YEAR IN PESHAWUR."

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A

YEAR IN PESHAWUR,

AND A

Lady's Ride into the Khyber Pass.



CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE cold season was just breaking up, and the much dreaded hot weather coming slowly but surely. Each day we could feel a perceptible change, and the grumblers would soon have reason to grumble in earnest, for in a few weeks the summer would be upon us in all its fury, and punkahs, tatties, iced beverages, and all other hot-weather appendages in full swing. No one who has not been in India can imagine what the feeling of an Indian spring is; so different to the English one, which is a time of rejoicing, one may say, especially to the old and poor, to whom winter is only another name for rheumatics

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and misery. In India, on the contrary, the period between the two seasons of hot and cold weather we scarcely ought to call spring, for there is nothing spring-like in it except perhaps in the extreme north of India, where the trees do bud and blossom and the leaves are green and remain so for a month or two. But in the north, March and April are pleasant months, indeed it is very cold there in January and February, and one may see snow on the near ranges and enjoy a fire in the house all day long. There are many drawbacks though to the north-country spring ; for during the day the sun is very warm, and the temperature like an English summer, while the nights are very cold ; and this great contrast between day and night induces fever, to which the poor natives, who are generally so thinly clad, fall victims in numbers. However, fever and ague are not usually so prevalent in the spring of the year as in the autumn ; the latter is very trying, particularly to the European portion of the population, who are so reduced by the summer campaign as not to have the same strength to withstand it as they have after being braced a little by the cold weather. Summer in India is of itself a campaign, for is it not a continual warfare with every kind of plague, from heat to insects ? From morning to night the best intentioned and least selfish people can think of nothing but the heat, and how to bear it, and the most sensible means to reduce its effect. It is

needless to say that individuals differ as to the best mode of getting through the days ; for where do they ever agree ? and India is the last place in which they are likely to do so. Some will say keep your doors open and let in the fresh air ; but these are usually of the "Griffin" stamp, for the air is far from fresh, and at some seasons hot enough to scorch the skin off your face. Indeed, when you go out for a drive in the evening, the effect is exactly as if you were sitting before a blazing kitchen fire ; but this is not the worst, for at times, just before the rains, when you cannot breathe at all, the clouds gather, the atmosphere becomes the colour of pea-soup, and breathing is really a difficulty. English people who have not visited the country cannot understand Indian weather. They imagine it is equally hot all the year round ; that the same seasons prevail, north, south, east and west, forgetting the difference there must be in the latitude and longitude of the different parts. Even, if in conversation with an ordinarily intelligent Englishman, you should allude to the cold, he looks at you in surprise and thinks you must make a mistake. "Cold in India ! dear me ! I thought it never could be cold there," is usually his answer.

Now I have had my say about the weather, I am going to begin my story, which opens at Peshawur, a military and civil station situated in a valley surrounded by hills. I need hardly say that Peshawur

is our last military station in the north of India, the nearest one to the Afghan frontier and the celebrated Khyber pass, of which almost all must have heard some time or other. Every reader of history must be well acquainted with the awful circumstances of that ever memorable Afghan war. Now Afghanistan has lately been so much talked of, written and read about,¹ that few, except those most intensely and wilfully ignorant, can fail to know something about it, although they may be ignorant of the causes of our present difficulties with Afghanistan and the Ameer of Cabul, who, after all, is but a puppet in the hands of a powerful nation. The whole business is but a repetition of the old story of the monkey and the chestnuts, and like it has its moral. No one who has been in that part of India, and lived among the people, or has even the smallest acquaintance with their ways and habits, can for a moment imagine that the nominal ruler of Afghanistan is a free agent, or that he would dare to insult the English government or the English people, (for whom some years back he professed to entertain a great regard,) if he were not made to do so, or at least strongly supported by another nation.

Shere Ali paid a visit to India and knows what English regiments and English arms are. Surely he would never dare to fight them by the sole aid of his own semi-trained troops and home-made weapons—he

¹ Written in November, 1878.

must have more sense than to do so. I must beg the reader's pardon for this digression, as it has nothing to do with the present story, the events of which occurred some years ago.

Peshawur is, as I said before, a military and civil station, which in other words means a place containing barracks and troops, as well as the civil courts of law and civil functionaries—as Commissioner, Assistant-Commissioner, and their subordinates. Peshawur has also a very strongly-armed fort, and there are always two European infantry regiments, a detachment of artillery, two Bengal cavalry and two native infantry regiments quartered there, so that it has a large garrison. It is surrounded by a road called the "Circular Road," on which are posted sentries and guards at short distances. The "Circular Road" and "Mall" are almost the only drives; the former is the prettiest, for from every part of it there is a view of the lovely hills, though military men hate riding on it on account of the perpetual salutes from the guards just mentioned.

There is a very strict rule forbidding all subjects of the English government to go beyond the frontier forts without an armed escort, and after dusk no one is allowed even to go outside the Circular Road. The fact is, our neighbours, the Afghans, are not very peaceably inclined; they have a way of playing at soldiers, trying shots at you as they would at game. It is their mode of being civil and

friendly I suppose, but we do not relish it much. I cannot say that it is very pleasant, when you are out for a quiet ride across country of an evening, to hear a bullet whiz past you within a few inches of your head; it at least startles your horse, if no more harm is done.

Afghan children are taught to shoot at each other as soon as they can stand; thus when they grow older they look upon shooting at stray Englishmen as an amusing pastime. They are also taught the use of the knife, which the Afghans always carry as soon as they can hold one. It is a dangerous weapon in their hands, and they are greater adepts at stabbing than shooting one another. They have such an extraordinary "nonchalance" about life, they do not much care whether they live or die—they are fatalists, as indeed are all the natives of India, though the Indians are not so murderously inclined a race as the mountain tribes of whom I am speaking. There is not a family known in a tribe that has not a "blood feud" with another family which lasts from generation to generation. The first principle the Afghan parent instils into his son is, that he is not to die until he has killed one of the family of the enemy; often in revenge for an insult that we should think amply absolved when pardon was asked.

In regard to their quarrels, one can truly say, *manet alta mente repostum*, is the feeling they encourage. The remembrance of their quarrels is

deeply rooted in their minds. Pardon is not a word in their vocabulary; they know not what it is to forgive one another, nor are they softened by Christian principles or Christian morals. Theirs is the religion of the false prophet who enforced his tenets with fire and sword, so different from the real and true "Prophet, Priest, and King," whose life and maxims taught peace and forgiveness.

At all events as a result of this, to our way of thinking extraordinary amusement, the rule before referred to was very necessary. Promises, they say, are made to be broken, and I think the same maxim applies to rules; for as soon as anything becomes a rule or law, the instinctive opposition that exists in human nature excites people to break it, especially hot-headed young soldiers who always think they know better than their commanding officers, and that no harm can come to them. There are always one or two of this sort in every regiment; and at Peshawur there was a small band whose delight it was to venture beyond the bounds on the plea of sport, to find some rare game they could find nowhere else. I think these few sport-loving young men must have been bound together by an agreement amongst themselves to break this rule against going beyond bounds whenever they felt inclined, to judge by their rashness and the scrapes they got into. I must say they were manly fellows and the right stuff for soldiers. I do not believe in a milk-and-water man who never got into

a scrape in his life. They are not the material for soldiers and life's real battle ; they may be valuable in a drawing-room, shine at a kettledrum, or an evening party forsooth, have plenty of small talk to entertain the ladies ; or, at their best, talk of the current topics of the day with their favourite newspaper's view of it. They may make good domestic men, attentive husbands and kind fathers. We must not cry them down though too much, for we do not want every one to be a soldier or all men to be alike.

In these days of competitive examinations I think there might almost be an examination, or inquiry I should say, into the scrapes each candidate has got into at school or college. If they are right manly scrapes on the side of sport and honesty, let him pass for the army before the learned student to whom classics will avail little in his career as a soldier. As we shall have much to say about those young sportsmen who were very brave but rash and reckless, I must describe them.

The moving spirit, I may call him the leader, was a fine, tall young man of about six-and-twenty, with fair hair and a long moustache ; he was a great athlete and sportsman, always to the fore in a long run with the hounds, no matter how steep the country or how wide the ravines. He did not know what fear is ; the horse he usually rode for an evening airing knew better how to gallop on his fore-legs than on all four, and yet

he was never thrown. I think he would have ridden a wild elephant without fear, could he have once got within reach of his tail (the method by which the natives mount elephants).

Charles Gordon was a fine officer, and much liked by all the men of his regiment ; they admired and respected him although some of the older ones would shake their heads and prophesy that he would come to grief some day.

Well, we shall see.

Some of these harum-scarum young men do come to sad grief, whilst others have the most wonderful escapes, getting out of a thousand difficulties, out of one of which it would take the lifetime of any steady-going individual to get clear. If I were to try to relate even one-half of the escapades of which Charles Gordon had been the hero before he had entered the army, I should have to write a volume about him only. But I do not wish to write his biography ; my intention is to record events concerning the lives of many during a year's residence in Peshawur, therefore I cannot say much more about him now.

His great friend in the regiment was very unlike him, as far as appearance went. Robert Hale was four years Charles Gordon's junior, but having no hair on his face at all, as a natural consequence looked younger. He was short, and had fair curly hair, and might have been taken for a boy of any age

not beyond his teens. He had many of Charles' tastes, and was quite as fond of sport and manly exercises as he was. On account of his size and light weight he was a better hand at "Polo," and was devoted to that game; for the same reason, added to his being a thoroughly good rider, he was in great request at all the races, and was engaged to ride his friends' horses months beforehand. Lucky the owner of the race-horse thought himself if he could get Robert Hale to ride for him. He was a first-rate amateur jockey and a lucky rider, and was always the favourite jockey with the ladies. Many a pair of gloves did the unfortunate men lose over him to the fair sex, who were not only permitted to have the best of the bargain, but might be trusted to make a good one for themselves. After every successful race Robert Hale was dragged up to the grand stand to receive the congratulations of the ladies.

Yet if he was much more what we may call a "ladies' man" than Charles Gordon, he was not a bit foppish; he was a man every inch of him. There was something scornful in the way in which Charles Gordon talked to ladies in general as if it were a trouble to him. In fact he was out of his element.

A man at all inclined to extremely bachelor habits, has everything in India to encourage him. Ladies are so comparatively scarce, that it is more trouble to cultivate their acquaintance there than in England.

Robert Hale in the intervals of sport always liked

to spend his time among his lady friends, and it was a good thing for him that he had some very good, kind friends whom he could see at any time ; Major and Mrs. Munro were his chief ones. The Major was in his regiment, and so, of course, unless he took pains to get out of their way, in the ordinary course of events he would see them pretty often. He was drawn more to them than to many others from the beginning, partly because his mother was an old friend—in their school-days—of Mrs. Munro's, and had asked her to look after her son. Major and Mrs. Munro therefore, from the time Robert Hale joined the regiment at Peshawur, had treated him almost as their own son.

A few months after reaching Peshawur, Robert Hale was down with fever, and a pretty sharp attack he had too—and the Munros took him into their house and nursed him through it and kept to him until he was quite well and strong. This attack was a good lesson for him, and made him more careful in future. He had brought the fever entirely upon himself by his great rashness. He would go out in the middle of the day shooting, in a tiny cap. Mrs. Munro gave him many a lecture, with some good result ; she told him he was fortunate to have escaped so easily this time, for many a man had to go home on sick leave after Peshawur fever. This fever is of a very peculiar kind, and the after-effects sometimes last a lifetime.

Many a young man's life in India might have been saved had they had such kind friends as the Munros were to Robert Hale in his illness. A young bachelor with no comforts in his bungalow, his furniture usually consisting of a bed, a table and a few chairs, has no one to give him food, and take care of him. He always, when well, dines at mess, and from the mess-table his food must come. The climate is against him too ; so that many an English mother is left to mourn the loss of a son who might have been spared that grief had her boy only had as kind a friend as Mrs. Munro was to Robert Hale.

CHAPTER II.

A PAPER CHASE.

THE 39th regiment was commanded by Colonel Lindsay, and he and Major Munro, who was second in command, were great friends; a friendship to which Robert Hale owed something, for the Major had spoken a good word for him on several occasions when some mad freak had reached the Colonel's ears.

The Colonel was a kind man; the youngsters called him a "regular brick," as he invariably—outside duty—shut his ears whenever he could to their escapades. On duty he was their commanding officer, and they knew well no one had a sharper eye for any careless or wilful neglect than he had. On parade no one could be more particular than he was, for he expected every man to act as if he were preparing for immediate service. The consequence of this was that he obtained no end of "Kudos" from inspecting officers, and his regiment was always ready for inspection. Colonel Lindsay

was not only a strict parade officer, but he loved his regiment next to his wife, and took the greatest trouble and interest in the whole working of its machinery. He knew, too, that the curse of the British soldier in India, viz., "idleness," was the root of most of the evils which befall him. The soldiers who were idly inclined, were sure to be those who were most easily tempted by boon companions to waste both time and money in drink. I suppose I ought almost to say that drinking is the root of all the evil, and so no doubt it is, for it leads to ill-health and entire bodily and moral demoralisation everywhere. In a hot country like India, a man whose whole frame is shattered by excess in drink is surely not likely to be able to withstand the ravages of fever and disease, so common there, so well as one who is abstemious, and consequently possessed of all his faculties of mind and body.

Colonel Lindsay, in order to extirpate this evil at its root, used his whole energy to give occupation to the men, and encourage them to work for their own amusement and profit, and so occupy their spare time. The Indian days are long and weary to soldiers, as they are to others; and to be cooped up in barracks all day with nothing to do, as they usually are the greater part of the year, is so trying that it is no wonder they drink to kill the time that hangs so heavily on their hands.

The men of the 39th had no excuse for being

idle, for they had every incentive to work according to their tastes. Colonel Lindsay did not undertake all that he did for the soldiers single-handed. Major Munro took an equal interest in it, and their example inspired the younger officers also to help and give some of their time to the soldiers. Each of these officers had one department to superintend, of which he was the referee on all occasions. The workshop was the most crowded, and the largest room of all. There, all kinds of carpentering were done, from fancy chairs and tables to packing cases. The sergeant who was in charge of it had learned the trade, and was of the greatest use to many a young man who came in to try his hand at work with a very small knowledge of plane or saw.

Then there were the gardens, where they worked night and morning, the produce of which they were allowed to sell. There was a little vegetable market in the early morning, twice a week, where many a lady's "khansamah"¹ would be seen, even daring to beat the soldiers down in the prices they asked. A native cannot understand that any one should mean what he says, especially in money matters. For instance, if the soldier seller—or his wife perhaps may keep the market-stall—should say when asked "This cabbage is two annas," the audacious native servant would be certain to take it up and say,

¹ Butler.

"Hum tum ko ck anna dega, bus hai,"¹ and march off triumphantly with it at his price. Their ways used to provoke amusement among the soldiers, more than anger, as they were so accustomed to them; but occasionally a little bad language ensued, as the natives were sometimes too aggravating to permit the straightforward Englishman to keep his temper. This little vegetable-market was a great boon to the English residents, as they were enabled by it to get nice English vegetables easily; and it especially benefited the soldiers' families who had no gardens. Another incentive to good gardening was the annual flower show, at which prizes were given for the finest flowers and vegetables.

There was a library and reading-room in the regiment for the soldiers, as well as a gymnasium, a band room, and a department for those who worked in leather, and even a room devoted to the tailoring and needlework branch. There was also a class-room, where a class was held by one of the officers for the younger men, in which both the Colonel and Major often had readings of an evening. They also used to get up "Penny Readings" about once a month in the sergeant's mess, which were looked forward to and enjoyed by all, and some of the ladies of the regiment used to attend them. The unfortunate soldiers' wives, who are more to be pitied in India than the soldiers themselves, were not forgotten.

¹ I will give you one anna, that is quite enough.

They had a work-room to themselves which was large and comfortable, in which they could do any kind of needlework. Some of the women were dress-makers, and others washerwomen, and full employment they found, notwithstanding the "Dirzees" and "Dhobees" that Anglo-Indians swear by.

We have now seen that Colonel Lindsay's regiment was quite a model to all others, and he and his officers were as thoroughly popular as they deserved to be with the men. Really, the lines of the 39th were worth inspection, and all agreed in saying "They were a lucky lot."

Colonel Lindsay was a married man, but his wife was in England at this time; she was to join him at Peshawur at the beginning of the next cold season with their eldest daughter. There were four ladies now with the regiment, including the Quartermaster's wife and daughter. The Quartermaster's wife in a European regiment, is rarely a lady by birth, although considered to be in society when her husband has attained the rank of a commissioned officer and been made Quartermaster. For he then dines at mess, and associates with the officers, and his wife must naturally be on visiting terms with the ladies in the regiment at least; although unless she be superior to the ordinary stamp, few outside it recognise her.

Mrs. O'Dowd, the Quartermaster's wife of the 39th, was a worthy woman who had struggled hard

to bring up a large family on small means ; moreover they were all in India, no small test of her discretion and good sense. No country can be more trying to bring up children in, both bodily and morally, than India. The O'Dowds had eight, and all were with them. Their eldest daughter was seventeen, and she had been home for a short period and had just returned. Miss O'Dowd was the only unmarried girl in the regiment.

The Adjutant, Captain Chaplin, was married ; he had a charming and very pretty little wife ; they had been married only a few months. He met her in the hills—at Murrec—the year before, and became engaged. She was the daughter of what they call a “faltoo Colonel,” who was spending six months with his family in the hills. What an easy-going life these faltoo Colonels do lead out there ! They can always get six months’ leave to the hills or Cashmere, and when they are in the plains in the winter have little to do except attend occasional “courts of inquiry,” and “courts martial.” Mrs. Chaplin was eighteen when she married, only a few months older than Miss O'Dowd. This young lady had little fascination of manner to compensate for her somewhat angular figure and hard-featured face, for previously to a short stay at a second-rate school at home, she had passed all her time in the barracks. Still Miss O'Dowd had come out with the impression that she was to be *the* attraction in the regiment, and

would monopolise the attentions of the stern sex. Great was her mortification, when Mrs. Chaplin appeared on the scene a few weeks after her own arrival from England, to find that the adjutant's wife was a greater favourite than herself. It would be useless to give way to fits of jealousy, for no one would pay attention to them ; indeed she was hardly noticed when taking no pains to conceal her mortification ; she would make spiteful little speeches about Mrs. Chaplin, equally unheeded. Mrs. Chaplin would have befriended the girl, who would have been far wiser had she accepted the offers of friendship instead of scorning them. The secret of Miss O'Dowd's extreme jealousy of Mrs. Chaplin was, the fact that almost immediately after her arrival she imagined herself to be violently in love with a certain young Lieutenant. This gentleman, however, it should be said, had not returned her affection, for one very certain reason—he was not aware of it.

It would no doubt have been very much better for Miss O'Dowd had she remained with her mother instead of going to the school ; for her head must have been crammed full of nonsense there or she would not have thought that the first young man who showed her any civility was in love with her. Mr. O'Dowd was himself rather popular with the young officers, and always did them a good turn when he could ; and so Robert Hale, like any other good-natured man, offered to lend his daughter a pony

and take her for a ride, soon after her arrival. He was a good-looking youth, and an immense favourite with the galaxy of rank and beauty of Peshawur, so the fault was not his if Miss O'Dowd should instantly fall in love with him. Robert Hale had never said or done anything to encourage such an idea ; he had only shown her the ordinary gallantry which every true gentleman shows to a gentlewoman. Thus she had only herself to blame. Robert Hale was the last man in the world to flirt with a girl when as in this case nothing serious could be his intention.

The connexion of all this with Mrs. Chaplin is this : Robert Hale from the time the Adjutant brought his wife to the regiment was constantly with them. The Chaplins liked him, and used constantly to ask him to join their rides, and dine with them. Miss O'Dowd, therefore, put all her imaginary blighted hopes down to Mrs. Chaplin's influence, and so was madly jealous of her. I must say her jealousy did that lady little harm. It was really too absurd. Robert Hale was not the only man at Peshawur, and as has been said had never led the young lady to suppose that he admired her at all. Another sore point with Miss O'Dowd was Mrs. Chaplin's good riding, and the praise she heard of it from all quarters. Mrs. Chaplin was a perfect horsewoman, and rode like a bird across country, and on anything but the quietest of steeds too. She was quite reckless on horseback, consequently though her riding was the

admiration of all beholders, her husband had many a fright during a run with the hounds or even in a paper chase, which the young men, especially the "roystering band," were very fond of getting up.

A few weeks after the respective arrivals of the two ladies, a paper chase was organised by Gordon and Hale, and the latter asked Mrs. Chaplin and three or four other ladies belonging to the regiment to join it.

They were all to meet at a certain "ghaut;" Gordon was to be the fox, and was to have a start of an hour. Miss O'Dowd asked Mrs. Chaplin to chaperon her, which she gladly did.

This was before Miss O'Dowd's resentment passed ordinary bounds; now they were friends, that is to all outward seeming.

Miss O'Dowd was riding her father's horse, a very quiet, steady old Arab, "warranted sound and with no vice."

The two ladies, Captain Chaplin and Robert Hale, were the last to arrive at the ghaut, and no sooner were they espied than the word was given to start, and away they all went, harum-skarum, helter-skelter, like so many mad creatures, over a compound wall, which proved more of a jump than was bargained for, as the wall though low on the road side, had a drop on the other. Mrs. Chaplin's horse was over like the wind; but poor Miss O'Dowd, when her horse rose for the wall and then descended to the

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ground, was thrown over his head in the most ignominious fashion. Fortunately for her, she fell right on to the top of a "charpoy," only that moment vacated by the "Chowkedar," who would have been rather astonished had Miss O'Dowd fallen on to him. It takes a good deal to rouse a sleepy native, but in this case the shock would have been sufficient.

Poor Miss O'Dowd was picked up from the charpoy, and her horse captured by a young officer of one of the native infantry regiments, a Mr. Brown. He happened to be just behind her when she fell, and apparently was the only one to witness the accident, for in the course of a few minutes all the other riders were almost out of sight, having during that time flown over two more compound walls.

The Chaplins at all events did not know anything about Miss O'Dowd's fall, not discovering her absence for a good half hour. Mr. Brown, after escorting the young lady home, rejoined the riding party by a short cut, reaching them in time to set Mrs. Chaplin's mind at ease, by telling her that her friend was unhurt, and already resting in her own home.

The fox they were pursuing sustained his wily character well, for his dodges to put them on the wrong track were most artful. He would scatter paper here and there in a manner to make them imagine he had taken quite an opposite route to the one he had really followed, and in consequence there was many a false start and unnecessary gallop.

They had been out a full hour, during which the grass had not grown under their feet. They were now a good eight miles from Peshawur, having been dodged backwards and forwards, and in and out, when they came to a large "nullah" with water at the bottom of it, and far too wide for a comfortable jump. It was very evident the fox had crossed it, for there were his marks plainly visible, also on the opposite side. They all came to a halt to discuss the next move. Mrs. Chaplin was for trying the jump; her husband begged her not to do so. The two other ladies of the party said they would not attempt it, and turned away, followed by four or five young men who declared their horses could not take such a flying leap, and so of necessity they must try to find another crossing. Not so Mrs. Chaplin; her spirit was roused, and nothing would keep her back. She spurred her little horse, and with a cheery word over he went. Was she safe? Oh! what was that? His off hind foot had slipped, and he was sliding backwards into the stream, struggling with all his might to regain his footing, but unable of himself to recover it, so slippery was the bank. In less than a moment Robert Hale recognized her peril, flew over, was off his horse and had clutched her rein just in time to save her.

What might have happened in another half second no one dared say. Had the horse fallen back, its rider must have fallen under it, and with a lady's

saddle the consequences would have been too dreadful to contemplate, to say nothing of the wetting she would have had. Captain Chaplin did not see his wife's danger until it was over, so sudden and unexpected had been her jump. He had been at the time a little in the rear talking to another man, and was only attracted by Hale's exclamation as he spurred his horse for the jump. Captain Chaplin followed him. He could not speak, his heart was too full of thankfulness for his dear wife's escape, and of gratitude to the gallant youth who had saved her. Mrs. Chaplin was a plucky little woman, for it must be allowed she had had a fright of no mean sort. But nothing would make her give in, she would go on; and in a minute she and the few who were left were again galloping, making their way to a small enclosure which was straight ahead, a right hiding-place for a real fox, and a capital one for this wily "Mr. Reynard." They spied him at last, and he, allowing the only lady now of their party to get within a few yards of him, gave them a chase, not allowing himself to be captured until he had reached the racecourse, by which time the sun was pretty hot, a pretty clear hint that it was time to go home to breakfast.

Miss O'Dowd never forgave Mrs. Chaplin for that ride, and did not willingly speak to her again for a long time.

This was littleness of mind no doubt. But perhaps

we should consider the circumstances. At least it was trying that the man whom she imagined she loved passionately, should be the one to save her rival's life.

It is said that jealousy is love, but I deny it, for though jealousy be produced by love, as ashes are by fire, yet jealousy extinguishes the love, as ashes smother the flame.

CHAPTER III.

AN EVENTFUL JOURNEY.

IT was now May, and each day saw gharree-loads of ladies and children taking their departure for the hills. The furlough season all over India opens on the 15th of April, and closes on the 15th of October, when all military men are expected to be again at their posts. The 15th of April is almost too early to care to go away on leave from Peshawur, as the weather there is far from unpleasant, being quite bearable for at least another month. However, as every officer—in native regiments at least—is entitled to two months' privilege leave, some must go on the 15th of April if they are to go away at all. That day generally sees the first flight, and dák gharrees have to be engaged for it some time before. Those fortunate ones, too, who are going for six months to Cashmere or the hills, are also of the first flight. The ladies and children whose husbands are not able to accompany them, but hope perhaps to join them a month or so later, generally go from Peshawur to their summer home about the beginning of May.

The hills are indeed in all their beauty then. The beautiful rhododendron-trees and the tree geraniums are in full blossom. There is such a grandeur about everything in the hills ; all is on such a large scale. The only insignificant things are the works of men ; their habitations are as dots on a majestic picture. Indeed one may everywhere, and in all parts of this wonderful earth, worship nature, and so feel the hand of nature's God. Wherever one turns, there is something to admire and reverence in the unseen Hand who made all things ; but nowhere can one be more inspired with that intense feeling of awe and wonder at the supreme majesty of one's God than in these mighty and glorious mountains.

“ Nature ! Great Parent ! whose unceasing hand
Rolls round the seasons of the changeful year,
How mighty, how majestic are thy works !
With what a pleasing dread they swell the soul !
That sees, astonish'd ! and astonish'd, sings ! ”

Oh ! if I only could find words to describe the feeling that comes over one when first visiting these glorious mountains. One seems really to realise truly what an insignificant creature is man ! what a minute particle of God's handiwork one human being is. One's spirit is raised from earth to heaven. Every lover of nature must feel what my poor words are inadequate to express, that ennobling, raising sensation, when one's eyes first view those, to human eyes, interminable mountains, each with a structure

peculiarly its own ; the distant ones with their snow-capped pointed peaks, all so blended together, as to form one mighty panorama of glorious beauty.

I must now return to Peshawur and life there, as the story has nothing to do with the hills, and the reader would like to know something about the journey and the mode of travelling.

The mighty monster which is as though an infant in the power of man, has not as yet invaded the valley of Peshawur ; so all travellers are obliged to travel by dâk gharree, a very pleasant mode of conveyance when it is a good one and the horses are tractable. It is a long night's journey from Peshawur to Rawul Pindee, a large military station forty miles from Murree. About half way between Peshawur and Pindee there is a river to cross at Attock, where there is a fort. In the winter the river is crossed by a bridge of boats ; but after the snows have melted in the near hills, it becomes fuller and larger, and the bridge of boats has to be replaced by a ferry. This is very troublesome, as it necessitates your turning out in the middle of the night, when it is pitch dark, and bundling all your things out of the dâk gharree and giving them to coolies, who are waiting to take them into the large boat, or properly speaking, barge. Your energies are pretty well taxed, and your temper thoroughly tried in the effort to keep your eyes on these officious coolies, who swarm like bees, and eagerly seize your things

before you know what you are about, and of course invariably the wrong ones.

The chances are, you are sound asleep when you get to the river, and are only awoke by the shrill cries of the native coachmen, hallooing to the boatmen that passengers have arrived. Well, if asleep, you naturally want a few minutes to wake up and dress yourself, at least to put on your boots, for you must take these off to sleep comfortably. You feel sure you have stowed them away on the shelf at the end of the gharree, and cannot find them in the dark. Only one boot is there! Oh dear! oh dear! what has happened to the other? You cry, "Coolie, coolie, buttee lao juldi hum jutee nai milsekta,"¹ and you get one of the flaming torches held at the door to enable you to look for the missing boot. No, it is not to be found. Surely that coolie has not taken it with the basket of soda-water to the boat—it was close to it. "Jou dekko,"² you frantically cry, and in a few minutes he brings it back triumphantly. Then your coat and hat are missing. Well, you can do without those, or you must; and so turn out in shirt-sleeves, and order the coolies to bring bedding and pillows. In a few minutes you are in the boat, all your things in a tangled mass at the bottom, and a shrill yell announces its start.

¹ "Coolie, bring a light quickly! I cannot find my boot."

² "Go and see."

Natives never can do anything without a great noise ; they seem to be born with the idea that everybody is deaf. If they are not themselves hard of hearing they certainly are of comprehension, which perhaps accounts for the idea. Well, you have just settled in the boat and are fairly off, the Attock fort looming dark over the black waters, and are perhaps wishing yourself in a comfortable English train crossing the river on a bridge, instead of in this barbarous fashion, when a rude shock and a terrific yell rouse you, and you are sent flying to the other end of the boat, vainly asking, "What is the matter?" but no attention is paid ; the native boatmen are too much taken up. With quarrelling? No, not that. It is their mode of talking. They are gesticulating as fast as they can ; you can do nothing but listen, and at last you hear, "Qua kurro lahassu toot gea,"¹ and you now know what has happened. The current is very strong in these rivers ; it is dangerous navigation too, and at certain places a rope has to be thrown ashore to be held by somebody there to keep the boat from drifting away. At last you make them listen to you, and when they find you have a rope at the bottom of the boat tied round your bedding, and can let them have it, they immediately invoke "Allah," fall at your feet and call you their preserver. The rope is mended by the help of yours, and the landing-place is at length reached.

¹ "What is to be done? the rope is broken."

Out you jump, and the same scene takes place as before, only you are too wide awake to have your boots carried off, or anything else. The coolies too have no chance of succeeding in cheating. All your things have to be bundled on to the gharree that is in waiting, and with a shout to the horses and a blow of the horn you are off until the next stage, where you may be delayed for half an hour by a horse refusing to start. **15,044**

To a looker-on for the first time the scene is amusing. The variety of tempers the dâk horses display is great. There are the "jibbers." Besides these are the ones that refuse to move at all, as stolid as the monument itself, allowing every kind of torture to be inflicted on them; lashed with a whip of knotted cord by the infuriated driver from the box; pulled by a long rope tied to the fore-leg by a man in front; pushed from behind by the wheels of the gharree which alone must cause pain. But these horses when they do deign to start, are the best goers; they go off with a bound, which the coachman insists on keeping up. Then there are the "kickers," and the one that often whirls round and round. One moment he will put his head in at one door, and the next his heels are banging at the other. All you can do is to sit still and wait patiently until they make up their minds to start, and be thankful when they are off. These incidents are of very frequent occurrence in a dâk gharree journey.

If it was not for them a long dâk journey would be pleasanter than a railway one, as you can make yourself very comfortable with pillows, rezaies (a kind of quilt), and almost imagine yourself in bed. Of course there are drawbacks; the dust for one thing being at times suffocating. It penetrates everywhere, and whatever colour your hair may be naturally, it is pretty grey at the end of your journey. However a plunge into a big bath, and a bottle of iced soda-water at the Dâk Bungalow, or hotel, in Pindee, soon restore your equanimity. The ordinary male traveller is generally "booked through," and so has no time for this, as he is landed at the post-office, and then has to start off again in the hill-cart for Murree. The hill-cart is a little light, low, open conveyance, with a canvas hood, and supposed to hold four people back to back. It is so light that the horses gallop the forty miles in about four or five hours, the vehicles being made expressly for galloping up and down hill.

Now I have described an ordinary dâk gharree journey, I am going to relate a most adventurous one, in which Miss O'Dowd and another lady were the chief actors. The O'Dowd family, had determined to start for the hills on the 8th of May, and had engaged three dâk gharrees for that day, into which they were going to pack themselves; and a friend, a Mrs. Vivian, who was to share a gharree with Miss O'Dowd. Into the other two were

to go "pater" and "materfamilias" and the younger ones, the four boys and three girls, who were to distribute themselves as best they could with their parents.

They had arranged to start about five o'clock, so as to reach Pindee before it became unpleasantly hot the following morning. The hot winds which had set in prevailed in the daytime, but the nights were not very oppressive. The two gharrees containing the heavy loads just described started first. Miss O'Dowd had to wait for Mrs. Vivian to call for her, the gharree having gone round to her house first; so the two were a good half-hour behind the others in starting; but as they were comparatively lightly laden —having with them only a dog and cat, a few bottles of soda-water, and a bag or so—they overtook the others about the third stage.

All went smoothly until they reached Attock; they only met with a few *contretemps* at the changing-places from kicking and obstinate horses; but those accustomed to Indian travelling think nothing of this; in fact, they become callous to everything almost, and wonder how people get on who travel in comfort, thinking what a curious sensation it must be. They crossed the river together, and had not even the excitement of a bump, and were congratulating themselves how well they were getting on, and how quickly too. They found their three gharrees waiting for them. The parents and

children packed themselves in first, as that was the chief business, for it required no small ingenuity to cram in so many of the small fry. So tightly were they packed when they did start, that they might not unfairly be compared to sardines in a tin. Then Mrs. Vivian and Miss O'Dowd placed themselves side by side ; the most comfortable arrangement when two people are in a dâk gharree, otherwise you are apt to find the heel of somebody's boot—or foot, if it is bootless—in your face, which is not always pleasant !

Mrs. Vivian, as she got into the gharree said to her companion, " How impatient the horses seem, they are actually pawing the ground. The eyes of one roll so too—the one on my side ; such an awfully vicious look it has, like a wild creature more than a tame horse. I suppose they are safe enough, though ? "

Dâk gharree horses are not given to running away ; such an event I should say was almost unheard of in the annals of the history of a dâk horse. Poor creatures ! they hardly get corn enough to have strength to run at all. Their lives must be short, with spare food, and hard work ; the necessity to go six miles at full gallop with a load behind them, is enough to kill most horses at the end of a couple of years.

Neither Mrs. Vivian nor Miss O'Dowd were in the least nervous, so they thought no more of the fierce-

eyed horse and the stamping and snorting. Nor had they heard the remark the "syce" (groom) made to the coachman, which, translated into exact English was—"Take care of this devil, he has a temper, and has not been broken in." Any other coachman would have remonstrated at being given such a horse to drive, especially for the coming stage, which was the most dangerous of the whole journey. But this Jehu cared nought for pulling or ill-tempered horses ; he had been in Government employ, and had driven on this road for the last ten years, and he was not now going to be mastered by an obstreperous horse, he had driven too many of them. He was supposed to be the safest coachman on the road ; not only a careful driver, and one who managed horses best, but also one who did not exasperate them by unnecessary flogging as so many of them will do, imagining, I suppose, that they are pleasing the impatient Englishman inside. Why are Englishmen so impatient in India ? Perhaps it is the contrast to the ever-patient Hindoo,—or is that patient Hindoo himself the one everlasting cause of the Englishman's impatience ? the perpetual irritant in his daily life and intercourse with the people ?

Well, they were off; starting with a plunge and a bound, and were well out of sight of Attock, and the two ladies were preparing themselves for sleep, when they felt a bumping and a most unusual shaking. First the gharree went to one side and

then to the other ; then they apparently drove over a hillock, next into a ditch, and then on the side of a bank ; and all the time they were going at a furious pace. They were afraid to open the sliding doors and look out, as every instant they expected to be upset, and they had to thank their good sense in so doing, that they were unhurt. Had they opened the door and looked out, that very action might have been sufficient to turn over the gharree, and one or other would probably have had a broken arm or leg, or even worse. A poor woman—a sergeant's wife—had been killed only a short time before by leaning out of the door ; for the gharree upset right on to her head—a most fearful accident, but perfectly true. This was a warning to them. They remained perfectly still and held on to the sides, though greatly frightened, as they both knew the danger they were in, for there was a precipice not far off, and if the horses made for it in the dark, they would all go over into the river and be dashed to pieces.

After they had been galloping over hill and dale across country, they were brought to a sudden halt ; so sudden that the shock was tremendous. After a while, feeling no movement, they quietly slid back the door and looked out.

Mrs. Vivian asked the coachman what was the matter. He told her the horses had broken away, carrying poles, shafts, and reins with them, and left

him sitting on the box. An elevated seat certainly, but it was rather a humiliating position for the man. He, the oldest driver on the road to be served thus ; he who had so long driven the "Sahiblogue" to and from Rawul Pindee, and had been the chosen coachman for the gharrees when chartered for the Lord Sahibs who occasionally visited Peshawur—these were Ahmed Khan's indignant thoughts.

In truth Ahmed Khan's pride had had a fall ; he could now no longer boast that he had met with no serious accident. This was indeed a serious one, but might have been far worse. They were left on a sloping bank, and to look at the position of the gharree it would seem as though a touch could upset it ; and a touch would have been sufficient to do so, had the weight been at the top ; but fortunately there were no boxes on the top, only in the bottom of the gharree, called the well, under their bed, and that helped to steady it. They had had a narrow escape of a very dangerous accident ; the horses only stopped short by a few yards of the precipice ; and had they not broken away when they did, in all human probability death must have ensued. What cause they had for thankfulness they alone could tell. The coachman in his Pathan dialect kept on repeating, "Allah be praised that we are not all dead men."

Now what was to be done ? They could not stay

where they were, eight miles from Attock and twenty from the nearest place where gharrees were procurable, "Hassan Abdul." If the coachman went to the next stage for horses, they would not be of any use without poles, shafts, and traces. For the whole of the front part of the coach-box had been carried away by the horses, and it was truly a mercy that all about the gharree was so rotten as to have enabled them to do it, and so have saved the inmates.

This was the means used by an All Powerful Hand to save them, for had the horses not freed themselves they must all have been destroyed. Ahmed Khan was humbled; but most people who have to suffer from their pride, always punish themselves in the end, and he, in this instance, was no exception to the rule, as we shall see presently.

He, "Ahmed Khan the great," he would have dubbed himself, so high was his estimation of himself—he, the oldest Gharreewan on the road, who had driven the Burra-burra Lord Sahib and several other Lord Sahibs too, to be beaten by two vicious horses! Oh! he thought, how he wished he could catch them, that he could give them his opinion in real earnest—a forcible opinion, too! no *via media* for these poor horses. If we read these tones and looks aright of the—formerly—great Ahmed Khan, the wretched animals would have fared badly indeed! Let us hope that they may escape being again

harnessed to his dâk gharree until he has forgotten his threats.

Well, the hero of the broken coach-box sat for a few minutes cogitating with himself as to his next proceeding, and did not vouchsafe to reply immediately to the demands of the inmates of the disabled gharree to "jou" and get a "doosera" gharree as "juldi" as possible. All he said was, in the intervals of a puff at his hookah—"Ha-me Sahib hum jata" (Yes, I am going). Many an appeal did the helpless ladies make to him without any better response.

At last he arose, having made up his mind—he quietly told them,—that he would be obliged to go twenty miles before he could bring them another gharree, and they must not expect him until seven o'clock in the morning—it now being between twelve and one o'clock. He intended to ride to Hassan from the next changing place, where he should find a horse. The poor ladies found it useless trying to persuade him to return to Attock, which was but eight miles off—he had told them so himself—where he was sure to find one.

With the natives' habit of lying—they know not what truth means, it lies at the bottom of a well with them truly—he had plenty of reasons ready for not adopting this sensible course. "All the gharrees were out, he knew; and those that were there, were of no use," was one of fifty equally lame excuses.

Mrs. Vivian, who was an experienced traveller, could not make his real reasons out. But the two helpless ladies were in his hands ; there was no man at hand to compel him to retrace his steps to Attock. Ahmed's real reason, which of course he never gave, was that he did not wish it to be known at Attock (where he lived) that he had come to grief. Thus, pride caused him to undertake the longer ride ; moreover, he knew that at Attock questions would be asked by the post-office authorities (in whose hands the Government dâks are), as to why he had allowed the particular horses to be harnessed to the gharree ; he ought at least to have tried to get others, which he had not done.

No, he in his pride thought he could manage those horses, but his pride had had a great fall. He knew, too, that they were the same horses which had run away a little while before and caused the death of the poor woman. At the time he had said it was the coachman's fault. I am afraid our friend Ahmed Khan the great "Gharreewan," will not now be able to hold his head very high when he meets the coachman he had condemned.

There was nothing for the unfortunate ladies to do but resign themselves to their fate and calmly bear the hot night wind, and the prospect of a suffocating drive in the heat the next day. They could not now possibly expect to reach Pindee until twelve or one o'clock, by which time the heat would be

unbearable—out of a cool bungalow ; but this was little to the prospect of passing the night by the road side.

They had never been exposed to the heat before ; and now they found even the night air hot and unpleasant, no longer driving quickly through it but at a stand still, and without a punkah, and so tired as they were too. Miss O'Dowd determined to lie down inside and go to sleep ; but Mrs. Vivian said she could not do that, as some of the wild people might come and rob them, and might carry them off if they found them asleep. Attock is close by a country inhabited by a number of the wild mountain tribes, who are constantly giving us some sort of trouble. They found they were not very far from the high road, indeed they were within sight of it. They had apparently taken a good gallop across country, and no doubt a short cut, which had induced the horses to career over it to reach the road again, which here winds very much.

Mrs. Vivian had been sitting on the bank about an hour, feeling very weary and very thirsty, when she descried a gharree coming from the Peshawur direction at full gallop. She immediately began waving her handkerchief and ran towards the road, so as to bring the gharree to a standstill. This she succeeded in doing after a minute or two, for the servant on the box seeing her, told the coachman to stop. She ran up to them and asked the man if he would leave word at the Dâk Bungalow at Pindce that she and

Miss O'Dowd were all safe, and only waiting for another gharree to arrive. She knew Mrs. O'Dowd would be anxious about their non-appearance.

The explanation took some time, and just as she had finished it a head appeared outside the door using anything but the mildest of language to the coachman, requesting to know why he did not proceed. When the head on the further side was withdrawn, a door slid back on the side where Mrs. Vivian was standing, and another appeared ; when, fortunately for the lady, there was in an instant mutual recognition.

“ Dear me, Mrs. Vivian ! how you did startle me ! What are you doing in this wild place, and all alone too ? ”

She told him her story, which the reader already knows, and Mr. Brown—for it was no other than the lieutenant, who had escorted Miss O'Dowd home from the paper chase—immediately spoke to his companion, who seemed to agree to what he said. Mr. Brown then turned to Mrs. Vivian and said—“ You must accept our place in this gharree and go at once in it. We will wait until yours arrives from Hassan Abdul ; we men are accustomed to exposure more than you ladies are, and it will never do to leave you both here alone. We could not possibly proceed at all under the circumstances. You shall have our servant also with you.”

Mrs. Vivian was too pleased at this prospect to do anything but willingly accept the offer ; she

carried Mr. Brown off with her to her gharree, leaving his friend Mr. Jones, and the bearer, to take out their things, and their boxes off the top. Then they all helped to carry the ladies' baggage, and arrange it in the gharree the gentlemen had vacated. Miss O'Dowd was sound asleep, when Mrs. Vivian awoke her with the news of their good luck. It was indeed good fortune, and poor Mrs. Vivian felt thankful to be emancipated from her watch by the road-side. Mr. Brown was a very gallant young man, and this was the second time he had come to Miss O'Dowd's rescue—very strange, and certainly accidental. He was a very unselfish man—in both instances he instantly gave up his own comfort to help another.

They were off in about half an hour, and as they did not pass the empty gharree coming for them until within a few miles from Hassan Abdul, it is clear they would indeed have had ages to wait for it but for the lieutenant's opportune arrival.

CHAPTER IV.

A COURT MARTIAL.

THE weather was now so hot as to make galloping at racing-speed across country, even at the early hour of five or six o'clock, anything but pleasant; the hunting paper-chases and riding parties had to be abandoned, and those unfortunate ones whose doom it was to spend the hot season at Peshawur, began to think of settling down to hot-weather ways, and resigning themselves to fate.

A month in the hot season seems like an interminable day; so monotonous are the hours, to-morrow so completely the counterpart of yesterday, that it is difficult even to remember the days of the week. Yet the twenty-four hours seem like a month in length; in the morning we say how thankful we shall be when evening comes; in the evening how grateful for the next morning. It is sad to contemplate how much precious time is wasted by Anglo-Indians in India, and the trying part is, that it is in most cases unavoidable, as far as the hot weather is concerned; for

during the greater part of the day the most energetic are prostrated with the heat, whilst many have no power to do anything but lie down and groan.

Every officer is entitled to two months' leave if he can get it; and to arrange it, is always a matter of interest and excitement before the leave season opens. The commanding officer takes his choice of the two months he wishes reserved for his own holiday, and the rest of the officers take it in turn and try to arrange it amicably among themselves. The last two months are the most coveted, as not only are they the pleasantest in the hills, but the hot weather ceases with them; so that there is no sudden jump from cold to heat such as falls to the lot of those obliged to return in the middle of the hot weather. It is a curious sensation—and the reverse of pleasant—that of going down hill and feeling yourself getting hotter and hotter every minute.

The Chaplins and Munros were going away for the last two months, and the two ladies intended to remain with their husbands. They had no children to compel them to go, were in good health themselves, and did not wish for an excuse. If this remark were more generally applicable to Indian ladies than it is, it would be well; for many are only too anxious for an excuse to get away to their gaieties. Out of the sixty ladies in Peshawur, only three or four were left to adorn the evening

band-stand with their presence, and so break the monotonous look that assembly would have had, with only stiff, white-coated men on horseback or in their "tum-tums."

The Chaplins gave up their evening rides, but on the mornings when Captain Chaplin had no parade, they used to go for a quiet canter through the peach gardens, to try and get a little fresh air before hermetically sealing themselves for the day. The paper-chase—in which Mrs. Chaplin so wonderfully escaped—was the last she had joined. She suffered a good deal, for the shock had been very severe, although she had only realised her great danger when it was over. She did not forget to thank Him who guided the human hand which was the instrument to save her.

The Chaplins and Munros were great friends in every sense of the word ; for disparity in age did not lessen the friendship. Edith Chaplin looked up to Mrs. Munro and respected her, a feeling that had much of sympathy as well, for she felt the older lady was a friend she could turn to in sorrow or joy, for comfort and sympathy, and for good, sound advice in every difficulty. Mrs. Munro was one of the ladies to be met in India but unfortunately very rarely ; she was a thoroughly homely person, kind to all around her, yet she was no stiff, starched prude, but a genial and pleasant companion. The young men in the regiment liked her because she entered

into all their home-sick feelings—could talk about the mother in England who was longing to see her son, or the sister who was going to marry “some horrid fellow.” Why do brothers always affect to talk of their future brothers-in-law as horrid fellows? Why should they think their sisters are either not to marry, or else to consult them in their choice?

Mrs. Munro saw Edith Chaplin every day; they nearly always met at “chota hazree”—that indescribably pleasant meal so essentially peculiar to Anglo-Indians in India, and one which we cannot make the true-born Briton in England understand.

“Chota hazree,” or little breakfast, is really the event in the day during the long hot-weather months. The time at which it takes place is according to the season; but in the hot weather it must be very early. The usual hour is between six and eight o’clock, after the morning ride or parade, as the charm of chota hazree is the being able to partake of it out of doors, either under the shade of a large tree, or in a nice verandah. Though even in such a spot, and at such an hour, a punkah is indispensable. It certainly is a sociable meal, and the Munros tried to make it as much so as possible by allowing any of the officers in the regiment who liked to come in on certain days. Twice a week they had quite a large gathering; days looked forward to, for these morning meetings and the sociable conversation were a pleasant break in the everyday monotony. The gentlemen felt

it a relief to get away from men's society and be in Mrs. Munro's presence. "Her voice was ever soft, gentle, and low; an excellent thing in woman."

Men do, however imperceptibly to themselves, feel the subtle influence and refreshment that companionship with such a woman affords. Oh! if women only knew how much influence they have over men, would they not try more than they do to use that influence aright?—surely those with one single spark of right feeling would. If there were more ladies like Mrs. Munro in India than there are, I may safely say the tone of society would be raised to a higher standard than it now has. But it would seem that most ladies who go to India entirely change when they get there. The climate and the idle life which is forced upon them are trying, and it is very difficult to fight against everything, to try and be different to their giddy neighbours. Of course the India of to-day is not the India of fifty years ago. The character it then bore for loose ways and looser morals is not applicable to the present time; but even now there is a sufficient difference in the proportion of gentlemen and ladies to admit of each lady having—if she chooses—a few admirers, perhaps all more or less aspirants to her favour. Still it is all the better for her that such should be the case, than that she should allow only one constant attendant to be everlastingly with her—the husband, an unconsidered

trifle. In the former case, no jealous enemy can say a word ; in the latter, tongues will wag and eyes will imply more than the tongues, for a look will kill, where a tongue will heal.

I am sorry to say Mrs. Chaplin did not escape these evil tongues ; her name was coupled more with Robert Hale's than her husband would have cared for, had he heard it—oftener than any well-wishing friend would desire. Ever since the eventful paper-chase in which Robert Hale saved the lady's life by that instantaneous action, the two had been more together than ever. He was with the Chaplins every day, and often escorted Mrs. Chaplin in her morning rides when her husband was engaged. Neither Edith Chaplin nor her husband gave it a thought ; indeed Captain Chaplin was very fond of the young man, he was so straightforward, and he encouraged him to ride with his wife, and be with them as much as he liked. He did not take into consideration how pretty Mrs. Chaplin was, and that consequently jealous tongues were only too ready to say spiteful things of her.

Mrs. Chaplin had another enemy in Peshawur besides Miss O'Dowd ; a Mrs. Jones, a flighty woman, willing to flirt, it might almost be said, with the first comer, in the worst Indian style. She was jealous of Mrs. Chaplin on account of her popularity, and the good looks which put her in the shade. For Mrs. Jones had no great charms in

spite of the eternal simper with which she tried to appear young and giddy. Yet she always had some admirers in her train. There was some sort of fascination in the woman no doubt; she was amusing to talk to—and amusing talk in the safe companionship of a married woman, has a value of its own with certain men in the monotonous life of India.

Captain Chaplin being ordered away to another station on Court-Martial duty, his wife was left alone. Robert Hale came to the house as usual, and escorted her out riding in the morning: he neither went to see her oftener, nor less often, than when her husband was at home. The only difference was, that sometimes she went out riding in the evening instead of driving; as she had only a buggy, and did not care to be driven in it by Hale but preferred riding with him. On band nights she drove with Mrs. Munro, whilst she dined with the Munros every night.

Captain Chaplin had been gone four or five days when Major Munro came in one morning from mess evidently disturbed in mind. Mrs. Munro saw her husband had been put out about something, and immediately asked him what it was. He answered—"Yes, dear, I heard something said I did not like."

"What do you mean, Edward?" she inquired.

"Oh! nothing to do with ourselves, dear; but they

are talking at mess about pretty Edith Chaplin and Hale ; they are too much together."

" Why, they are no more together than they were when Captain Chaplin was at home."

" That does not matter. These amiable detractors do not take that into their consideration ; they are only too glad to find an opportunity of saying anything against Edith. That Mrs. Jones is at the bottom of it I am quite sure, as the remark I heard came from one of her set—a young fellow whom I fancy Edith snubbed, and who doubtless is as small-minded as Mrs. Jones must be."

" But what can they have to say about poor Edith, who never speaks unkindly of any one ? They would do well to be as good as she is."

" It seems that he met Edith and Hale round by the race-course on the new road after dark, and he says they were conversing very earnestly, and insinuates that he overheard some of the conversation, and makes much of it. We must do something for her, she is far too pretty to escape malice."

" Shall we ask her here, dear ? The spare room can soon be got ready. It has not been wanted all the hot weather, so the punkah fringe is not on, nor the 'baine' or ropes, but that is soon done ; I will write at once."

" Just like you, Mary," said the fond husband, " you are always ready to do a kindness ; write to her at once, and ask her to come and pay us

a visit, and she can remain with us until Chaplin returns."

"He will be back the day after to-morrow, will he not?" asked the wife.

"I am afraid he will be detained longer than he expected, as there was some flaw in the evidence, and the Court had to be adjourned for a day or so; and then, the chances are it will re-assemble after that. Pindee is too far off to come back on the chance of having to return at his own expense, and the journey is not inviting this hot weather."

Mrs. Munro wrote to Edith, who gladly accepted her invitation; and when the cool of the evening came, she prepared to go over to the Munros' bungalow, and was with them in time to join their evening drive. That night was band night, and they drove to the band stand, where Mrs. Munro saw Mrs. Jones and the young man who had so maligned her friend Edith Chaplin. She gave Mrs. Jones a steady and straight look—meaning much—when she acknowledged her bow. The look was effective; Mrs. Jones quivered under it. Mrs. Munro treated the young man with supreme indifference, taking no notice of him at all.

Robert Hale was there, and she purposely asked him before Mrs. Jones to come and dine with them that evening, saying to him at the same time, "Mrs. Chaplin is paying us a visit, and you will only meet her—no strangers, only friends—so don't get

yourself up this stifling evening regardless of expense."

Mrs. Munro said all this loud enough for Mrs. Jones to hear, and yet naturally and simply. Mrs. Jones looked conscience-stricken ; she knew she was the one—and she knew now Mrs. Munro knew it as well as herself—who had tried to take away Edith's fair fame. "What's Fame?"

" All that we feel of it, begins and ends
In the small circle of our foes and friends."

Captain Chaplin returned at the end of another week, to Edith's great joy ; no one who witnessed her intense delight could doubt its truth, or that she had done anything but look forward to her husband's return. A pity Mrs. Jones was not behind the "purdah," when he arrived !

How much they had to talk about to be sure, and tell each other. They had never been separated before, and although they had written to each other every other day quite long letters, yet they fancied each could not know what the other had been about. She told her husband how good the Munros had been to her, and how comparatively quickly the last week had passed, with Mrs. Munro to talk to during the day ; whereas, the first week, she had had nobody but her ayah when Robert Hale left her in the morning after he had taken her for a ride, when not on parade.

The men of the 39th had, as we have seen, a kind and considerate commanding officer who did not grind them on parade, and being so thoroughly well drilled in the winter they could rest in the summer. They had a commanding officer's parade and also an adjutant's, once a week, but no more. Of course an orderly-room was an absolute necessity, no European regiment can do without it. Young soldiers will disobey their superiors, soldiers will be absent at "roll call" occasionally, or call one another bad names, or be "cheeky" to their sergeant.

There was one very bad case that summer, which ended in a Court Martial. One soldier insulted another, calling him some opprobrious name ; the other, a hot-headed young Irishman, drew his bayonet, and went at the man, when his hand was stayed by a looker-on. They were both put under arrest, and the case reported at the orderly-room. When Colonel Lindsay inquired into it, he found there was, as usual, a woman at the bottom of it.

The case was this : a private, Smith, had died in the early spring, of Peshawur fever, and left a widow to whom Private Thompson proposed the day after her husband's funeral, and only two days after his death—for he was buried the day after he died. She accepted him. But a few days afterwards Corporal Green proposed to her, and to him she also said "Yes." Now as she could not mean "Yes" to both, she was naturally in a difficulty of no small dimensions.

However, she managed to explain to Private Thompson, that she had changed her mind. He was not by any means desperately in love with Mrs. Smith. He simply thought he had better not lose the chance of getting her for his wife if he could, as she was a comparatively young woman, and very comely, and likely to be sought after. Thus, so far as the widow was concerned he did not take the refusal much to heart; he could wait for the chance of another; but he hated Corporal Green and swore to be revenged on him—they had never been friends—as he thought he had only proposed to Mrs. Smith to spite him. So in a fit of sudden anger, after being called a bad name by Corporal Green, he drew his bayonet, not thinking of the consequences. They were tried by Court Martial. Corporal Green escaped with the loss of his stripes; he was reduced to a private, which was a great disgrace; whilst Private Thompson had six months' cells. The whole matter was a source of great sorrow to Colonel Lindsay; he felt for a soldier's misconduct almost as though he had been his own child.

CHAPTER V.

PESHAWUR FEVER.

THE much looked forward to rainy season' had begun in Peshawur; the poor thirsty earth drank in the welcome draught as copiously and greedily as any great monster might do. Everything was as parched and dried up as it well could be ; the roads were hard and cracked ; the gardens, flowers, and vegetation of all kinds, had been burnt up long before ; the wells were drying, for the rains were late this year.

A drought was threatened, and the Cavalry regiments would have been obliged to march out into camp had not the welcome thunder-storm (which as surely ushers in rain as the drum announces the approach of a regiment) burst upon the cantonment. One might indeed say with Byron—

“ Till taught by pain,
Men really know not what good water’s worth,
If you had been in Turkey or in Spain,
Or with a famish’d boat’s crew had your berth,
Or in the desert heard the camel’s bell,
You’d wish yourself where truth is—in a well.”

Good water in Peshawur was scarce at all times; there was plenty of water to be seen, but little to drink. There are running streams of water that come originally from the hills, but pass through many a dirty village ere they reach Peshawur. These streams run on each side of the road, and are convenient for watering the garden, as they can be turned on to it without any difficulty. The necessary watering constitutes the trouble of an Indian garden. It is useful, too, for washing purposes, but highly dangerous as a beverage. Indeed the bad water in this part of India is one of the principal causes of the great sickness which at times prevails at Peshawur. When one thinks of this poisonous water, and how many drink it, both natives and Europeans, who can wonder that every sort of fever and disease prevail, and are rife there? Nor is this the only evil that accrues from the running streams that pervade the place. These do harm, and even more certain harm in another way; the damp rises from them in a sort of mist, and this mist is the fever poison. Doctors may quarrel over their pet theories upon the origin of different diseases, but as Shakespeare hath it—

“ Diseases desperate grown,
By desperate appliance are relieved,
Or not at all.”

They (the doctors) have put their heads together often enough over that everlasting puzzle, the Peshawur

fever, and all the other sicknesses with which the place abounds; for it is not fever alone that carries off human beings at times like rotten sheep; pneumonia or lung disease is particularly peculiar to this station of Northern India; and the natives who are attacked by it die in numbers, especially in the winter. I think if a treatise were written on the unhealthiness of Peshawur, which is rightly designated "the graveyard of India," it might embrace a disease peculiar to every month of the year. The situation of Peshawur, to begin with, is most unhealthy, as it lies low, and in the vicinity of swampy marsh-lands.

The rains had "set in" some time, and it was a fortnight before the Munros and Chaplins were to leave for the Hills. They had taken a house at Murree together, and were going to spend two months in that pretty Hill Station. They had been looking forward to it all the long hot-weather days. No school-boy more eagerly longs for the coming of his holidays than they longed for the 15th of August that was to see them *en route* for Murree.

They did not exactly mark off the days in an almanack, or make notches on a stick as the school-boy does to make the holidays seem nearer; fallaciously, for time thus counted always appears longer in bringing full fruition of our hopes.

One evening Mrs. Chaplin came home from her drive feeling very ill; she had not been bright all

day, but had fought against the feeling, trusting the outer air would revive and restore her. She had said to herself, "I shall be all right after the drive;" but feeling no better, and the languor increasing, she sent for the doctor, who, when he came, said she was sickening for a regular attack of Indian fever and ague. The next morning she was no better; and by the evening the fever had flown to her head, making her delirious. Her poor husband was very anxious about her, and did his best to nurse her and to do all that the doctor prescribed. But men are sadly out of their element in the sick-room; and, good husband as he was, he greatly felt his incapacity to tend her as he would wish—and though he moved quietly about the room and had almost the gentle hand and quiet tone of a woman in his new ministry of love, yet his very anxiety destroyed his efficiency as a nurse. Yet if love and tenderness alone were required, he would have been the best of nurses. He could not bear to hear his dearly-loved wife tossing and moaning in all the wild delirium of fever.

The next day Mrs. Munro took up her abode in the sick-room, having insisted on doing so. She saw at once how it was with the husband, and that if he were left to nurse his wife any longer he would himself fall ill from sheer nervousness and anxiety. She therefore remained in the house, and slept in the patient's room, as she could thus administer all medicines herself at the regular hours, and attend

to all her wants. She would not hear of a European nurse being called in from the barracks, and would not allow that she could be ever tired. Good, kind creature! She was a true nurse, and knew how to husband her strength, and to make the best of her time for repose and sleep. She did not fidget about the room unnecessarily, but just did all that was required for Edith's comfort, and then lay down beside her. She did not torment her with questions as to *how* she was? whether she liked this or that? For there is nothing more tormenting to one who is ill than to be plied with questions, and consulted—although done by many in ignorant kindness—as to what they will take, and other matters. The sick like to feel confidence in their nurse, and simply to be *cared* for by her, knowing all will be well ordered for their convenience and comfort; and this is ever the case when a nurse not only knows her duty, but does it. What is the use in relieving your patient bodily, if you tax her mentally? The nurse, too, seems by her instinct—sharpened by experience—to know how the patient is, better by her observation oftentimes, than by the patient's reply to her inquiries; for the invalid will often fancy herself better than she really is; so true is it “the wish is father to the thought.”

Edith Chaplin had been ill for a week, and was now getting better gradually but surely; so much so, that the doctor thought she would be able to travel in another week's time; and added that if she were

able to bear the journey, the change of air would be the best medicine for her. Mrs. Munro—dear good soul—took all the trouble of the arrangements required for the journey upon herself ; she would not let Mrs. Chaplin think about anything ; she only wanted her to get well and strong again.

It requires some skill and management to arrange for a move to the Hills, even for a two months' visit, as you must eat all the time, and have something to eat out of as well. You must have your servants with you also. The consequence is, you have to despatch your heavy baggage quite ten days before you start yourself, so as to give it time to arrive. The heavy baggage is usually sent on a *hackri* (country cart on heavy wheels, minus springs!), which is drawn by two or four bullocks, according to its size and weight ; and these poor patient beasts plod on, albeit slowly, yet surely. You have to manage for these ten days with half your staff of servants, as a certain number must be there when you reach your destination to wait on you, and have all in readiness for your arrival ; while those who served you in the plains, follow and join your household as quickly as possible. Travelling thus is easy and comfortable too. *Dâk gharree* (post carriage) travelling is very expensive ; so except the two taken on the top of the *gharree*—usually the bearer and ayah—the servants have to travel in a slower fashion, *i.e.* they either walk the journey or proceed by bullock-train.

The difference of procedure between the bullock-train and your baggage hackri, also drawn by bullocks, is that the bullock-train continues to move along by night as well as day, and has relays of bullocks to meet it at the different stages on the road; whereas a hackri engaged for your own goods and chattels alone, for any stated journey, goes by "marches," with the same cattle the whole way.

The government bullock-train answers to our luggage-train where there is no railway in India. It transports all boxes from one place to another; and natives can also travel by it in a van reserved for the purpose. I think one's servants prefer the slow march to going by the bullock-train, because when they have done their ten or more miles "march" they need do nothing more for the rest of the day but eat, sleep, and smoke, which just suits the native taste. The Indian indeed would not agree with Cowper—

"Absence of occupation is not rest,
A mind quite vacant is a mind distress'd."

The ordinary natives of India are really more like animals: they never seem to have a thought on their minds, so these lines hardly apply to them. I mean, of course, the class of native belonging to the lower order of their kind; although they all, from the highest to the lowest, have the same tendency to apathy and indolence. No doubt the climate causes

this ; yet there are many bright exceptions, and many intelligent natives.

The races indigenous to Northern India are far more intelligent and clear-headed than those further south ; and although naturally semi-barbarous for want of civilisation, yet they are more of the European stamp. The country being so much colder, I suppose their brain has so much larger growth than that of those who are exposed to perpetual heat. Europeans themselves who have been many years in India must be more or less affected by the climate : and their intellects, as a rule, become less keen.

Mrs. Munro had made all the arrangements for the move, having sent nearly all her own servants on ahead to the house at Murree ; and as the Munros and Chaplins dined together, one cook did for both families.

I am sorry to say poor Mrs. Chaplin was not destined to leave on the appointed day. She again felt very weak, and told her husband she must go and lie down while they were at breakfast. He saw in a moment that she was ill, and sent for the doctor, who only shook his head, and said he "was afraid she was going to have another attack of fever, and if so, she must not go on the 15th."

Captain Chaplin went over to the Munros to tell them the sad news, and to ask what was to be done. Mrs. Munro immediately said she would remain with Mrs. Chaplin, and her husband could go on if he

liked ; but neither of the gentlemen would hear of such a thing ; they were both determined Mrs. Munro should go on the settled day. The last nursing had tried her strength ; and though she would not allow it, her husband knew it, and could see she was flagging. Captain Chaplin said, "Surely a nurse could be found who could take care of his wife—she so disliked the ayahs feeding her and tending her, and he felt himself to be but a poor nurse."

Mrs. Munro promised to start off to the barracks that evening in search of a nurse, and did so as soon as the heat allowed her to go out.

One comfort of the rainy season is that you can go out earlier than during the hot winds. The heat of the two seasons is different ; the latter scorches your face, while the former makes you feel as if in a Turkish bath.

Mrs. Munro found hunting for a nurse no easy task. She first went to the hospital of her husband's own regiment, and asked the matron there if she knew of any.

"Yes, ma'am," she replied ; "I know several who call themselves such, but they are not much good : reg'lar old Mother Gamps!"

"Oh ! save Edith from a Gamp!" mentally ejaculated Mrs. Munro.

The matron then consulted her books, and came back with more hope in her face, saying, "I quite forgot two nurses whom I can recommend, ma'am,

—Mrs. Tucker and Mrs. Foley. Mrs. Foley is a young woman, twenty-five years old, and attended Mrs. D—— with her first baby. Mrs. D—— told me she liked her immensely," she added. "Mrs. Tucker, poor thing, has lately become a widow, and might not feel equal to going out to nurse yet."

Mrs. Munro drove off to the artillery lines, which were at the other end of the station, and inquired for Mrs. Foley, and found her after a length of time in the married quarters, or I should rather say *heard* of her there; for she was "absent," Private Foley said, and "attending a confinement case in the Hills." Then Mrs. Munro inquired for Mrs. Tucker, whom she found only two doors off. Mrs. Tucker was "at home," and in answer to Mrs. Munro's kind questions —full of sympathy, for she scarcely liked to ask her to come out to nurse so soon after her bereavement —answered—

"Oh, ma'am, I'm that accustomed to sorrow, I hardly care what becomes of me now. I have buried my husband and five children in this place: they all died in one year: he died of consumption, poor fellow! aggravated by the fever, and the children of fever and cholera. You know, ma'am, we had the cholera here last year, and the children dropped off like mulberries."

Mrs. Tucker added, "she would like to go out and nurse the sick lady; it would give her something to do and think about. Here in these dreadful barracks,"

she said, "she did nothing but cry over her lost ones ; what was the good of that ? I can't bring them back by it, ma'am !"

How unevenly misery seems to fall in this world !

Mrs. Tucker was installed that night, and a kind nurse she proved to be. Her powers and energies were not so much taxed as Mrs. Munro's had been ; for Edith's present attack was not nearly so severe as the last one, and she did not become in the least delirious. The only great cause of anxiety was her extreme prostration ; the first illness had left her weak, and the second attack had come before she had had time to recover her strength ; then, also, it is almost impossible to regain strength in hot weather.

The Munros had started, and Edith had had a letter from her friend telling her of their safe arrival. They accomplished the journey without any mishap, although Mrs. Munro had acknowledged being rather frightened crossing the river, which was so swollen. She had crossed it before by the bridge of boats, so this was her first experience of the ferry.

Edith was not able to move for a fortnight ; but at the end of that time she was pronounced fit to travel, but only by easy stages. So they decided upon staying at Attock for a day, and so breaking the journey, and again at Rawul Pindee ; from which place she was to go in a dhoolie up the hill. They spent the day with a friend at Attock, a Colonel

B—, whose wife was in the Hills ; but his house afforded far more comforts than the dâk bungalow (or staging-house.) For these are miserable places to stay in, especially for a sick lady. The beds are usually hard and dirty, if not alive ! and nothing to eat but a skin-and-bone fowl, which is hunted in front of you, and perhaps caught under your nose by a half-naked man, knife in hand, a process that does not improve your appetite.

Dâk bungalows, like everything else, differ ; some are good, and some bad : and I suppose in a few years' time they will all die a natural death, as hotels have sprung up in every Indian station, not only one, but two or three ; and as they vie with each other for custom, their prices are kept down.

The dâk bungalow khansamah (butler) is the most aggravating man to talk to. When you wish to order dinner, and ask him what he has, he invariably answers, " Sub kuch hai "—meaning, everything that you want I have. But when you question him further, the " sub kuch hai " invariably dwindles down to the skeleton fowl I have described.

The Chaplins arrived in three or four days. Edith was very tired, and very thankful to find herself once more in a comfortable bed-room, with a nice wood fire and a door that opened and shut with an English handle.

There was a blazing fire in the drawing-room ; for it was evening when they arrived, and quite chilly

and Mrs. Munro knew Edith would feel the change in her weak state.

We must leave them in the Hills ; nearly all our friends are there now. Robert Hale went with the Munros, and he was going to spend two months with them and the Chaplins. A happy two months it was for him with his friends ; lucky young man ! He was so different with them to what he was with the rollicking companions, with whom he was the wildest of the wild ; no freak too mad for him to join in.

They had a large house belonging to one of the Governor-General's staff, who had gone to Simla that year. The house was a little away from any others, and was surrounded by trees inhabited by monkeys. These monkeys were rather troublesome ; they were such thieves, and some of them were so tame that they did not scruple to walk into the larder, if the door were left open, and carry off anything they could lay hands upon.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTMAS DAY IN PESHAWUR AND IN THE DISTRICT.

THE fifteenth of October had come and gone, and all the military men were back at Peshawur, except a few stray ones, who by hook or crook had managed to get a few days' extra leave. The drill season had commenced, and commanding officers and their adjutants were busy arranging the daily parades and other duties. The brigadier-general and his brigade major were also cogitating together over the brigade parades which were to take place, and the inspections they were obliged to go through.

Each regiment has to be inspected once during the cold weather by the general officer commanding the division. The one who was commanding at Peshawur, General Wood, was a very gallant officer, and deservedly popular with all the troops. He was a comparatively young man, and had received very quick promotion, owing in the first instance to his gallantry ; he had lost an arm in the service.

Although General Wood had only one arm, he seemed to do more with it than many men can do with two. He was a good shot, a splendid rider, and even used to hunt. He was also a good croquet player, far better than most men. Every lady player who loved the game and played for the game's sake, liked "the general" for a partner, and thought herself lucky if she secured him for the game, either as her partner or her adversary—in the one case he was sure to be a valuable ally, in the other he was a foe worth beating. But the ladies who only cared to flirt with their balls or their partners, were never to be seen in the general's set.

In Peshawur, in the cold weather, there is plenty of occupation and amusement for everybody. As soon as winter sets in in India, the people break out into life, like butterflies emancipated from their chrysalis shells. The cold weather begins about the middle of October, although punkahs are not generally used after the middle of September. The ladies and children, however, do not return from the hills before October; an earlier change from the hill climate would be too sudden, but by this time the weather has become quite cold and wintry.

October and November are the most unhealthy months of the whole year; at Peshawur very many are ill with fever at this time. This year, fever was very prevalent; there was somebody ill in almost every house, and there had been great mortality

among the soldiers. By Christmas, I am glad to say, the fever had much diminished ; there were only a few patients left in hospital, and everybody was feeling brighter, and ready for any fun. When there is much fever in Peshawur it is terribly depressing. The place is never at any time normally healthy, and the chilly, damp feeling it always has, especially after sunset, seems to pierce through to the bones, as it were, and pervades everything. There is usually a week's holiday at Christmas, and all the officers who are fond of sport generally try and get a few days' district leave for shooting ; but there is not much choice of shooting-ground round Peshawur, it being a station that sporting men would call slow. No deer to stalk ; and those beautiful black buck and ravine deer that afford so much amusement and sport down country are not to be seen near Peshawur. The black buck is excellent food, and makes very good venison, not at all to be despised, though not of course equal to English venison bred in a park. No Indian game can be compared to English of the same kind, the country is too sterile to afford rich pasture land. Nothing grows in India to the same perfection as it does in England. The English fruits which grow there are of a very inferior quality and taste. The peaches from Cabul, and the grapes, are more like what are grown in England than any other fruit. But one must remember that the fruits there are almost, if not entirely, uncultivated, and

grown on common soil ; whereas at home they are tended as in a well-cared-for nursery.

There was no pig-sticking either ; the sportsmen used to go out for a day's shooting, and bring in game such as hares, and birds of all sorts. They found plenty of different kinds of partridges, sand-grouse, rock pigeons, and the "oobhārā," a kind of francolin, the "chāhā" or snipe. There are plenty of quails too, which are to be found principally in the spring. The natives are fond of catching them with large nets, and the Europeans buy them, and shut them up in a dark place underground where they thrive and fatten, and are quite a reserve for a nice dish when from the want of variety in the provisions, the poor lady of the house finds it so difficult to order any meal that will tempt her guests to eat anything at all in the hot weather.

There were many plans made for the Christmas week according to the different tastes of individuals.

Three or four ladies went with their husbands to visit friends at Rawul Pindie ; others had their friends to visit them ; and many were the Christmas day dinner-parties, and long the invitations for them.

Every commanding officer asked all the ladies in the regiment to dinner, of course their husbands too, and as many bachelors as room could be made for. No one minded a squeeze or wanted elbow-room on Christmas day, and indeed they had to do without

the *de rigueur* arm-chairs, which take up so much room and are so uncomfortable.

The general and his wife entertained the officers of the staff, and their wives ; and as many odd ones as their table would hold. By "odd ones," must be understood officers holding independent appointments on the staff and attached to the regiment, such as the executive engineer, and others. Possibly a few stray "do nothing" colonels were invited out of sheer compassion.

I must allow there were some in Peshawur, though I am bound to add sorrowfully that they were in the minority, who thought of Christmas, not only as a day of festivity and good dinners, but as one of the greatest and most joyous festivals that the Church throughout the world celebrates. I do not say that the inhabitants of Peshawur neglected to go to church on Christmas day—far from it. The church was always fuller on Christmas day than on any other ; many go on Christmas day who never think of going on a Sunday during the year, perhaps from old association. Possibly it quiets their conscience to feel that they have worshipped, or joined in the worship, in the House of God once during the year, and thus at 'east do not seem to be quite outside the pale. But this is a matter of feeling and conscience, with which at least my story has nothing to do. It was at least a day of hearty and general good-will.

The church at Peshawur is a fine building ; a real

church, no makeshift place of worship ; its tower can be seen for many miles, and looks like a picturesque beacon in the distance with its background of mountains.

The building itself was not only good, but there was a good clergyman, who earnestly tried to do his duty and teach the congregation aright, and to bring them to see the value of Church privileges ; no easy matter with a congregation composed of all denominations. He had daily service all the year round. In the winter, the hours for Sunday services were the same as in England ; but in the hot weather they have to be in the early morning, and in the height of summer, six o'clock was the hour. The troops march to church, and so must be in barracks again before the sun becomes dangerously hot. Very gay a Sunday morning in India is, with all the military bands playing and marching in front of their respective regiments, to and from the church ; whilst during the service there is always a guard outside ; a custom invariably observed ever since the mutiny.

The church at Peshawur was decorated, and it looked very gay too, this Christmas morning, with all the officers and men in full dress. The European infantry in their scarlet and gold lace, then the artillery contrasting with their dark blue and gold lace, and the officers of the native regiments in various colours, some "kharkee" (drab), and others red. Last but certainly not least—for I think it was the

handsomest uniform of all—came the Bengal cavalry, dark green and red facings, and such a quantity of gold lace on sleeves and coat, with gold pouch-belts too ; and very uncomfortable they looked in their finery, and I will give them their due and admit that most of them hated their full dress, and all its irksome adjuncts. Some of the officers looked as we should expect them to do had they chain armour on. Some few, too, gave one the idea that they had grown a little stouter since last Christmas, and would be very glad to be out of theirs. I am afraid this told a tale of its own ; for full dress is obligatory when the troops go to church on Sunday mornings, and those of our friends whose coats were too tight for them could not have been to church on a Sunday morning very often—if they had, they must have suffered much. The fact of being obliged to wear it keeps many officers of native regiments away from church ; they would go could they do so in their comfortable braided coats, which always look well too. Officers of European regiments invariably go to church with their men ; they have no choice but to attend what is called “ church parade.”

Charles Gordon, Robert Hale, and two native infantry officers, Lieuts. Fuller and Peters, applied for a week's leave to go to the frontier forts together, —Abazaie was the one they chose—as they thought they would be able by going there to get some sport, without much risk of being shot, as at every fort

there is a small garrison. Each native regiment at Peshawur supplies a certain number of men to garrison the frontier forts, who are relieved every month in the cold weather, and every two months in the summer. An officer has always to accompany the men "on command."

Our four friends were all great lovers of sport, and had been looking forward to this week's leave for a long time ; they were determined to make the most of it, and not be frightened by anything they had heard. Several old croakers at Peshawur shook their heads, and said the general was very rash to let them go out together, as they would surely be up to some mad freak, and bring the authorities into trouble. They were certainly the four wildest men in Peshawur, though none the worse for it, for their fun was all honest and above board.

Off they went on Christmas eve, with two bell-tents between them. There was an empty room in the fort which they could use for their meals.

Before I proceed to relate these adventures, the result of their mapcap spirits, I must say something about the situation and purposes of the Frontier forts. There are three about twelve miles from Peshawur, separated from each other by a few miles. Shubkuddur is in the centre, Michenee about seven miles off on one hand, and Abazaic on the other, distant from Shubkuddur about four or five miles, with the river running between the two forts, close by Abazaic. These forts

are supposed to protect the frontier, and are really outposts belonging to Peshawur itself. They each have a commanding officer, who lives in them all the year round. Colonel Scaly at Abazaic, Colonel Carter at Shubkuddur, and Colonel McMullin at Michence. Those poor wretched colonels were to be pitied; no places could be more dreary and dull than these frontier forts. "A dull man is so near a dead man that he is hardly to be ranked in the list of the living"—this was their case, they were indeed buried alive.

The country where these forts are situated is most deserted, looking nothing but a dreary waste of sand and uncultivated land covered with stubbly looking bushes with no pasture of any sort. This is the character of the whole country between the forts and Peshawur. The officers who command the forts were all unattached, and it may be supposed that it was only the extra pay which induced them to take the appointment. Few could care for such a life as they must have led there.

The colonel at Abazaic had been there for years; he was a married man with wife and children, who had lived with him there a long time, but were now at home for the education of the young people. The resident at the Abazaic Fort was the best off, for with the river so near, boating was easy, and he had besides cultivated some land and amused himself with superintending the farming of it.

Shubkuddur is a round fort, with a kind of court-yard in the centre, and the officers' quarters one side of it, raised some distance above the level ground. These quarters are very circumscribed, consisting of only one room for each person. There were four rooms altogether, but all built separately, just like separate bungalows ; that is, bungalows consisting of only one room, verandah, and bath-room : rather close quarters for a married couple. A lady would occasionally accompany her husband on his tour of duty at the "outpost forts." Then all they could do was to hide away the beds in the verandah in the daytime, and turn the room into a sitting-room by day, and a bed-room by night. Such were the makeshifts English ladies put up with during a few days' visit to the frontier forts. How this sort of thing would astonish a fine English lady who had possibly never been out of England ! However, I do not wish any one to run away with the idea that it is the custom in India for visitors to walk into your bed-room ; I am only describing what ladies have to do if they visit these outlandish places, and the frontier forts may be termed outlandish in every sense of the word.

At Shubkuddur there was a young lady—and no one will doubt she was to be pitied, for she must have had a terribly dull time of it living there with her father all the year round. Colonel Carter was a widower, Flora was his only daughter, the comfort

and sunshine of his life. There was plenty of outside sunshine at Shubkuddur, but the internal life there truly needed a sunny and bright companion. Flora used to ride every morning with her father, and would pay an occasional visit to friends in Peshawur; this was all she had to enliven her.

The four friends decided to go to Abazaie, as the proximity of the river promised well for the chance of more variety of sport. This was their first shooting expedition in the neighbourhood. They determined to lose no time, and made their plans for every day.

The morning after their arrival they all started off with their guns, their flasks and some dry biscuits in their pockets, and intended invading the enemy's territory. It was against all orders, and they knew they did it at their own peril. They were not in ignorance of the risk they ran by going beyond the prescribed limits of safety; but they were so determined to amuse themselves to the utmost that they did not care what they did.

They had gone about twelve miles, walking very steadily and quietly, all of them some distance apart, as experienced shikarees do; but their patience was sorely tried, for they had literally seen nothing in the way of game, and they had hardly seen anything living either in the shape of human or animal life. Except when they passed a village, where a few men came out and stared at them, they saw nothing

alive ; and these men were next to inanimate, for they only stared with their mouths open as if they wished to encompass the strangers well with both eyes and mouth. But if no word escaped them, this silence was made up by the numbers of squalling children. Why are Indian children always screaming ? screaming and crying, I should say, more than any other children in the world. The babies certainly do ; it may be perhaps because "Stedman's teething powders" are not yet known in these benighted regions.

A few women could also be seen outside the villages, who tried to imitate their lords and masters and stare at the "sahibs," though half afraid to do so openly. They could only take a sly glance through a hole in their "chuddahs" (sheets), whilst pretending to cover their faces and hide their beauty from the gaze of man.

Hale was getting rather tired of the dull walk, and suggested to Gordon that they should return and try their luck elsewhere. It would have been well for them had they done so. Gordon would not hear of it. He said, "Surely you do not want to go back yet after only a twelve-mile walk, and we have the whole day before us. We had better try and push on to that small hill in front of us with a village at its foot ; it looks only about three miles off."

"Yes," said Fuller, "we ought to find something there, as it has an appearance of growth and

vegetation, and so there will be a possibility of finding something alive."

"The country we have traversed so far," returned Hale, "could not afford food or shelter for beast or bird—perhaps we shall be able to get some milk in the village."

Poor Hale! there was nothing for him to do but submit to Charles Gordon's decree; for Gordon was the leader, and, unfortunately for the bodily comfort of the others, never seemed to get tired.

Robert Hale and the others agreed that they would never venture to start again for a long day's shooting without taking their "tattoos" (ponies) with them; twelve miles across that rough, stony, rugged country was equal to many more on flat, ground.

The sun was pretty strong by the time they reached the village of "Pumrec." When they were within a few yards of it, they saw a string of natives coming towards them in true native style, "Indian file." It is a rare thing to see two natives walking side by side. The front man, a fine-looking fellow, with a long black beard, appeared to be of some importance, for he was riding a horse, whilst all the others were on ponies or on foot, and his dress also betokened a higher rank than the rest. They all carried arms of some sort, but of various kinds; even a club-stick and hatchet were not despised by those who had nothing better. There were some young

boys of ten or twelve years old amongst them, and even these carried sticks.

They all wore the winter dress of the country—sheepskin coats over their loose cotton jackets, and loose flowing garments. Almost all the commonest and poorest people in that part of the country, wear these sheepskin coats; the skins are dyed a kind of yellowish brown, and the woolly part is worn inside.

The leader of this string of people had on a real astrachan, which is an expensive skin even in that part, for though so near the country it comes from, there is a heavy duty on it.

When Charles Gordon and his companions descried this large concourse of natives advancing towards them, they began to wonder what it could mean, and supposed they were making an expedition to another village. Still they did not quite like the appearance of so many armed men—they could see their arms glittering in the sunlight. They closed up and walked together, shouldering their guns, and sincerely wished they were on horseback, instead of on foot; for if they were attacked they would be very helpless against such a number.

There were quite fifty, including the boys, but looked more, for they rode and walked in a straggling way one behind the other.

As they approached each other, the leader,—who looked like a Jewish rabbi, with his flowing beard and

white turban—stopped, and the others did likewise. Charles Gordon stepped forward, making a sign of friendship, and speaking his best Hindustanee, which, however, the leader either did not understand, or feigned ignorance of.

Neither Charles Gordon nor his friends were at first sight impressed favourably with the man's looks. He looked at the young men too as if he did not approve of them—or perhaps it was their guns he did not like—he certainly eyed them well, and he seemed to them to be trying to make up his mind as if in doubt what to do next.

After looking at them searchingly from top to toe for the space of two minutes, which seemed to them four times as long, he called up another man with whom he conversed in the Pushto dialect, but not a word of their conversation could either of the Englishmen understand, except "sahib," and that was sufficient to let them know they themselves were the subject of it.

At last they stopped, and then the second man stepped forward and addressed them in a kind of Hindustanee—not the Hindustanee talked in the lower parts of India, but more of the mixture of Pushto and Hindustanee that is talked in the north of the Punjab, and round about Peshawur. He asked them what they were doing. Gordon did not understand his pronunciation, but Fuller did, as he had been learning the language a little while with a "moonshee," and

knew more of it than his companions. Fuller therefore, at Gordon's request, became their spokesman.

The man who was talking to them spoke quite as if he was an equal, not in the usual deferential—indeed cringing—way natives usually talk to the “sahiblogue” (gentlemen).

However, that is probably because we English are the conquerors and their rulers in India ; whereas the man who was now talking to the Englishmen was in his own country, and they—the Englishmen—were trespassers in it ; this no doubt made the difference. The mutiny was a telling instance of how the natives could in one day turn from humble, respectful servants to become insolent, cruel, tyrannical rulers.

Ahmed Alli, the man who was talking to Mr. Fuller, was the son of the chief or leader. He asked one question after another, “What they were doing ?” “Where they were going ?” “Why they had those guns ?” He even asked what kind of guns they were : and took them in his hands and inspected them. To all of these questions Mr. Fuller answered shortly and politely, giving him to understand that they were peaceably inclined, and were no spies. But natives are very suspicious ; and they seemed now to doubt the young men's statement that they had only come out on a shooting expedition, for the man immediately said, “Where is your game ?” Mr. Fuller could only answer that they had seen none.

It is not surprising, perhaps, that under these

circumstances the sportsmen were looked upon with some sort of suspicion, for they were perfectly alone. Few Englishmen go out shooting to such a distance without a "shikaree" to guide them ; for without one to show them the country they could hardly expect much success.

When Ahmed Alli had finished questioning Mr. Fuller he turned round to his father and began talking to him in his native dialect ; which is a most harsh one, and wants the soft, easy, gliding sound of Hindustanee. All this took a long time, and Gordon was beginning to fume, and said to Fuller, "I cannot stand these beggarly rascals talking to us in this fashion ; let us go on." Fuller advised him to be still, as he saw they were already looked upon with suspicion, and would probably be surrounded and shot, if they did try to make a move. They could not but feel that they were in an uncommonly ticklish position ; knowing, too, as they did, how little these people think of taking life, and what thorough born and bred murderers they are.

Charles Gordon, however, looked upon Fuller as too timid, and without really making up his mind to move, he made a step forward as if to appear to go on—to try the effect as it were. The man, Mohammed Alli, at once walked up and said something which they did not understand until his son stepped forward and interpreted it. It was this :

"My father, who is the chief of our tribe, the

‘Swatees’ does not wish either of you ‘English sahibs’ to move on until we have had a conference as to what is to be done about you. Neither he nor ourselves believe for one moment that you have simply come here to shoot birds, as there are none to speak of—none, that is, worth the trouble of shooting—round about here ; and you only try to make us believe it to hide your real purpose.” Fuller tried here to interrupt him, but he would not be stopped, and went on to say—“We are not fools ; we know that you English people are hostile to us, and that you are forbidden to come into our country ; therefore why do you break your own laws, and come so far into it too ? You as subjects would not dare to do it, and by it defy your government. You must have been sent here for some purpose. We wish you to return with us to the village, and we will there hold a conference about it. You are our prisoners.”

This was a pleasant finish to a morning’s shooting, and our friends, one and all, wished now they had not defied the rules. But they were none of them chicken-hearted men, and were not to be overawed, even in appearance, by double the number of those now present. They saw they had not to deal with puny Hindoos. Indeed the tribes on the borders of Afghanistan realise one’s conception of what border tribes should be, stalwart men, equal in size and physique to the ordinary Englishman, whilst their features, which are of a Jewish type, are not in

the least like the Hindoos or Mohammedans of Hindoostan.

Charles Gordon was for making an instant resistance ; but the others, who were no cowards, but less impetuous, begged him not to ; and as they were completely outnumbered he had the sense to succumb. Probably for this good advice he stood indebted to them for much, if not for his life.

CHAPTER VII.

STILL IN THE DISTRICT. REPARATION AND SUCCESS.

THE village into which Gordon, Hale, Fuller, and Peters were taken, was not unlike other Indian villages in those parts, except that it had a more well-to-do air about it. To begin with, it was much larger, and was more like a little town surrounded by a wall. The entrance was under a large high archway, under which was a door, and leading from it a comparatively broad road, with small native huts on each side. There was an attempt at grandeur, and one could not but notice it, small as it was. In all Indian cities, palaces and hovels are jumbled up together in a confused mass, as if they, that is, the dirty huts and hovels, had dropped there by accident. "The city of palaces" is no exception to this rule, although one might imagine that in it things would be differently arranged, but the contrast there strikes one more than elsewhere.

Our friends entered this little town, or large village, feeling very much like prisoners ; for although their guns had not been taken from them, and they were not of course handcuffed, still they were prisoners to all intents and purposes. Indeed they would have found it difficult to escape, surrounded as they were by armed men ; and after they had passed through the gate they could not, it is to be supposed, have felt very much at their ease. I doubt whether the heart of the “lion-hearted” himself would not have quailed a little had he been in their shoes,—that is if he had known as well as they did, the character of the people in whose complete power they had fallen. Their position was hardly more enviable, and their lives hardly more safe, than that of a political enemy in the streets of Rome in former days. They well might sincerely wish that they were out of the predicament.

When the procession arrived at the gate of this little town it halted, and went through a ceremony before the chief himself attempted to enter. There was delay, too, possibly owing to his unexpected appearance.

He had left with all his followers on an expedition to a neighbouring village, and had not intended returning until the next morning. According to custom he delegated the command in his absence to his next of kin. It happened to be his brother “Dost Alli” in this instance, his son Ahmed Alli

being with him as we know. The great man would not re-enter his town until he was received by his brother at the gate, and the rightful forms and ceremony gone through.

The brother Dost Alli—after a little waiting—arrived, having been informed by some loiterers of the return of the party. He came forward, riding a pony, and with a number of followers at his back, in much the same order as the procession before described. They came up the centre road and stopped on reaching the gate. Dost Alli then dismounted, made a sort of half salaam, half salute, went up to his elder brother's pony, held one of the stirrups, whilst he in his turn dismounted, then embraced his brother, and the two walked hand in hand into the town and again embraced ; after which Mohamed Alli mounted his horse—which was being led behind—and again assumed his place at the head of the whole procession, his brother Dost Alli walking just behind the son Ahmed. They proceeded to a large square plot of ground all dusty and “kutcher,” with, in the centre, a raised place, on which was a bit of old matting and a cane chair—very rude and rough in workmanship. Mohamed Alli on arriving at this spot, dismounted, and immediately seated himself on the chair ; all his followers arranged themselves in circles round him, his son and brother on his right and left, and the others at distances according to their rank, the servants and camp-followers forming an

outside ring. All these squatted on the ground except our four friends, who, not being accustomed to sit tailor fashion, stood—and how well they looked too, and what a contrast they were to their surroundings!

There is something unmistakably aristocratic in the bearing of an English gentleman. Charles Gordon looked almost bigger, and more indifferently scornful than ever ; but a close observer of his handsome face could see how tired he was, and how he inwardly fumed over the whole proceeding, though no one of them looked in the least afraid.

Before they proceeded to business, the preliminary smoke took place. Mohamed Alli's pipe was brought to him by his servants, who carried it in his train ; then when he had fairly begun his "hubble bubble," all soon became engaged in the same way. "Follow my leader" is the game these people play always, and on all occasions. A full quarter of an hour elapsed before he put his pipe down, and began addressing his brother and son. Just as he was about to speak he looked towards the four Englishmen as if to make sure that they were there. He said something to a man near him, who disappeared, returning in two minutes bringing on his head a "charpoy" (bed), which he placed in front of the Englishmen and made a sign to them to sit on. They availed themselves of the permission with inward reluctance, not liking the prospect ; but as they knew civility was intended by it, they did their best to appear to

appreciate it. They were obliged to sit on the extreme edge—on the frame work; for had one of them attempted to sit on the bed itself he would have fallen backwards most ignominiously, if not completely through to the ground, so thoroughly rotten and broken was the netting.

A great deal of talking and gesticulating took place, but they could not understand a word. They knew of course they were the subject of the conversation, and supposed their fate was being decided. To all appearances their captors,—or whatever their rightful title is—could not agree, and a good hour elapsed before a word was addressed to them. At last the man who had spoken to them before, Ahmed Alli, proceeded to go through the same string of questions, and received the same replies from Fuller. These were again translated to the chief and those near him. All the others did not try to conceal their perfect apathy.

Again they talked and gesticulated; and when they had apparently come to some decision, the young man began a regular harangue, and in very questionable Hindustanee—more “Pushto” dialect interlarded than anything else—he told our party once more that they could not believe they were innocent of coming into their country without some design, and in fact the Lord Chief Mohamed Alli must simply look upon them as spies. Their statement that they had come so far, and into that part too, in search of game was

too absurd for belief, for they had walked twelve or fourteen miles and had none to show; and besides, that was not the part of the country that sahibs would be likely to visit on such an expedition. "Pumree" was a well-known and important village, and no Europeans ever went near it. It was far more likely, in his opinion, that they were trying to make their way into Cabul as spies, or with some secret message to the "Amcer" from the English government, or with some designs to release Yakoob Khan or help the disaffected. He informed them, too, that they must submit to be searched, and if nothing was found upon them, then they were to accompany the chief on the expedition on which the cavalcade was bound when first met. One was to be left as a kind of hostage in the village. "It all depends," he went on to say, "on the conduct of the three who went with them whether the life of the one who was to be left would be spared. If they did not obey orders, and behave themselves, they would not answer for what they would do to him." He paused for a minute, and Fuller suggested that they would like to know what expedition they were to go upon.

"We will not tell you now," he answered, "but you must help us, you shall know to-night. Now take off your coats and give them to us."

This was indignity indeed! but they were too helpless to do anything but submit. It was useless to assure their captors there was nothing in their

pockets. A race of people given to lying from the time they can speak, are not likely to believe the words of others, although the others have been brought up in very different habits.

“ Falsehood and fraud grow up in every soil,
The product of all climes.”

They are fruitful trees in that one !

The coats were well overhauled, the pockets turned inside out, without anything being discovered beyond the ordinary contents—pocket books, knives, hand-kerchiefs, and a few rupees, and in one a letter, apparently an English one. The things found were well handled and inspected, and passed from one person to the other for re-inspection, as if they in their turn were capable of holding something contraband. The letter was opened and minutely scrutinised, and seemed to be looked upon with suspicion, as all else was returned to the pockets, but not with any regard to the rightful ownership. The letter was retained. It was in vain that Mr. Peters, to whom it belonged, told them it was an English one, from one of his own family—they would not return it.

When the search was over the young men were told to prepare for the expedition and to draw lots, to decide who was to remain behind in the village—a method of decision common to Eastern countries. The lot fell on Fuller, who would fain have gone with the others, but there was no help for it. Hale, on the contrary, would rather have remained, as he was

the least strong of the party, and did not care to be dragged by these wild people, whither he knew not. He was also very tired.

Fuller explained to "Ahmed Alli" that they were very hungry, and he hoped they would give them something to eat before requiring them to proceed on the expedition. He answered, that "Of course they would not prevent their eating, but they did not see how they were to provide them with food, as no one would eat out of dishes that had been used by a Christian."

However, after a little more parleying, some "chupatees" were brought to them in an earthen dish and some milk in another, with which they had to be content. A nice Christmas day dinner to be sure—rather a contrast to the one their friends at Peshawur were enjoying.

Although the lot had fallen upon Fuller, it was settled by Mohamed Alli himself that he had better accompany them, as the only sahib of the party whom they could understand, or who understood them.

In truth, Mohamed Alli was beginning to think from their outward docility and civil behaviour that his captives could be no spies. Thus it fell out that Hale remained, as he had desired.

All these arrangements and the long preliminary confabulation had taken some hours, and by the time the expedition was again ready to start it was

quite three o'clock in the afternoon. The members of the party seemed at first to be undecided as to whether they had better start at all that day; but the chief was determined and the others had to obey. They went through much the same ceremony at the gate that they had done at their entrance, and then proceeded, the Englishmen walking with Ahmed Alli.

Fuller tried to enter into conversation with him as to the object of their journey, but without eliciting anything beyond the fact that their chief was bound on a visit to a neighbouring chief. He finished up by saying that "it would be time enough to see when they got there what would happen. 'Allah' knew, but he did not."

The party did not follow the road the three had traversed that morning, but branched off just a little way beyond the place where they had been met. "Oh! if they had only been a few minutes later," they thought; and each one cursed his luck, I fear, and thought "what an unlucky Christmas it was, for free-born Britons to be dragged at the tail of these beggarly ruffians like slaves!" And it is easy to imagine how great was the trial of temper to Gordon, and how he swore to himself that "they should smart for it one day."

By the time they reached the outskirts of the village to which they were bound, it was very nearly dusk. This village was much the same as the one

they had left, but with not quite such a “well-to-do” air about it. The only difference in the ceremony on their arrival at the gate was, that neither chief dismounted ; they met, saluted, and rode in together, the head of the village leading the visitor.

The Englishmen could not help observing that they did not appear to be very welcome guests ; the demeanour of their hosts seemed of a covert hostility, whilst apparently trying to keep up an outward appearance of friendship. They were all escorted to a large building very rough and ungainly to look at, but still with a roof ; had it been without one it would have exactly resembled the open square described in the other town. This building seemed intended for a kind of public reception-room, or hall of justice. It had become so dark that they could not see anything inside the room. The little oil lights were brought in earthen saucers, a very primitive kind of illumination. The two chiefs went out together to the private house of Fudjoo Khan, the chief of this village, leaving all the others in the big room. In half an hour food was brought in in earthen dishes and set before them all, and our three friends were not sorry to partake of it, uninviting as it looked, swimming in “ghee” and fat ; for hunger is a good sauce.

After the Afghans had finished their supper, they began smoking, and by degrees lay down, and very shortly half of them were asleep. This was a bright

prospect for our unfortunate friends, certainly ! they did not know what to do. As soon as they saw all the men were asleep, they began talking to each other in whispers. Charles Gordon suggested that they should slip out quietly one by one, whilst the natives were sleeping. "I kept my eyes open," he said, "whilst we were entering this dirty place, and I saw a regular hole in the wall, about a yard from the gate, to the right of it as we came in, and there was also a deep ditch where one could lie down if in danger of being observed."

"Lucky the rascals left us our guns," said Peters.

"We must not all go together," continued Gordon, "that would excite suspicion ; but if we wait until they are all sound asleep, we might slip out one by one. I will go first, and wait on the other side of the wall until you two are over."

They all agreed to follow out this plan as soon as possible, and then lay down and pretended to be fast asleep, keeping their "weather eye" open nevertheless, so as to detect in a moment any movement among their neighbours.

They were all pretty close to each other, Ahmed Alli happening to lie next to Fuller, which was unfortunate. However, they could not help it, and they were near the door, so in one way theirs was the best position. As it turned out, it was lucky Ahmed was so near, and especially that Fuller was next to him.

It was now about midnight ; Charles Gordon was just going to try and move, having first taken a good survey of his neighbours, who all appeared to be asleep. He crept to the door and looked out, but just as he did so, he heard very stealthy footsteps coming slowly towards the door. He immediately crept back again, and by the time they had reached the door, Gordon was lying down again on the dusty ground, without any sign of having left it.

The man who entered was Mohamed Alli himself, now quite disguised ; instead of his white turban, he had on a grey one, and a long grey "choga" over his other clothes, a kind of red shade on his beard and hair, which quite altered his appearance.

Charles Gordon did not recognise him at first, but his son Ahmed did instantly, and he apparently had not been asleep after all ; he had only been pretending to be so, and had really not taken his eyes off Gordon when he had moved towards the door.

Mohamed Alli went up to his son and began talking to him very earnestly in a whisper, but loud enough for Fuller to hear. His entry was indeed a blow to all the hopes of escape which they had so lately entertained.

Fuller listened most attentively to the whispered conversation, of which he could only understand a word here and there ; but he was sufficiently sharp to be able to put these words together, and made out enough to give him an idea of what they were

going to do. It was not only alarming but strange ; some deep-laid plot it seemed to him was about to reveal itself.

The whole party were aroused by Ahmed Alli, one by one ; after a whispered instruction to each, he went on to the next one.

The deed they were now about to perpetrate was to carry off the daughter of the chief, Fudjoo Khan, by fair means or foul.

For a long time past Mohamed Alli had demanded the daughter of Fudjoo Khan in marriage without any satisfactory result. Mohamed Alli was very imperious, and treated Fudjoo Khan more as an inferior than an equal, although he could not really have thought him one, or he would not have wished to marry his daughter.

Fudjoo Khan on the other hand treated Mahomed Alli with hauteur, and thought himself superior, because the tribe to which he belonged, the "Adam Khels," had formerly been a more powerful one than the "Swatees"—that of Mohamed Alli ; but the latter was now the stronger, as he could muster the greater number of men, and the tribe having increased in strength and numbers of late years, was far the more wealthy of the two.

Mohamed Alli had become very impatient at all the "shilly-shallying," and so had made up his mind to visit Fudjoo Khan in person and see what a peaceful interview would do, and if that did not

answer he was determined to gain his point by one method or the other.

Mohamed Alli did not even demand a dowry, which was quite contrary to the usual laws of their country, where the marriage dowry of a daughter is a matter of extreme anxiety to the parents—if they are poor. Fudjoo Khan was very much in debt, and wanted to sell his daughter literally, for he would not consent to the marriage unless Mohamed Alli gave him a piece of land between their territories, which he had long coveted.

This Mohamed Alli would not consent to, so nothing satisfactory was arranged.

Mohamed Alli had for some time foreseen that Fudjoo Khan would not give in, and so had laid a plot, and had put other irons into the fire to be used if necessary. He had a spy in the “harem” of Fudjoo Khan, and he had bribed the old nurse—in whose charge Fudjoo Khan’s daughter was—to give her up to him and do his bidding. The old woman was perfectly prepared to give the girl up—that is, assist in any plan Mohamed Alli chose to make for removing her to his own house, and of course accompany her, as she would not have dared to remain behind without her charge.

It was settled between the spy and herself that at a given signal, she and her charge should come to the door of the house, well muffled up and shrouded in large sheets, where they would find two dhoolies

waiting for them carried by some of the armed men, and well surrounded by others. This was to take place in the dead of night, and at a given signal from the spy.

In case of any treachery, or any of the enemy being on the alert, Mohamed Alli had brought these armed men to surround the house; and then when the girl and her nurse were well outside, they were to be instantly surrounded by the men and taken quickly to the gate. This plan though could not have been matured without a considerable sum being spent in bribes; and we may be sure money was lavishly expended on all about the abode of the girl. Fuller communicated as much of this design as he could make out to his companions, and they agreed to make their escape through the hole in the wall whilst the men were occupied in carrying out the instructions they received, and lie down in the ditch until the whole of the party were well away. They trusted to the darkness to aid them.

This bold plan was successful until Mohamed's party reached the gate, when they were pursued and told to give up the girl. When they refused to do this, they were fired upon, and a skirmish ensued, during which the three friends managed to escape to the wall, though they did not lie down in the ditch.

The dholies had been set down close to them when the fight began, and the poor girl was so

frightened that she began crying and calling out for somebody to save her. The Englishmen heard her, and immediately prevailed on the bearers to take the dhoolies, outside the gate, which they did; and they then insisted on their going to Pumree at once, and they themselves escorted them there. On arriving at the gate they demanded admittance, and also an immediate interview with the brother, Dost Alli, who had been left in charge. They explained to him how they had rescued the girl, and brought her to this village.

The tables were completely turned. Instead of being prisoners, they were now looked upon as heroes, and nothing could exceed the attentions they received.

Mohamed Alli came off victorious, and returned, with only two of his followers even wounded. His gratitude to the Englishmen—when he heard the great service they had done him—was unbounded. He did everything in his power to make them comfortable, sent for clean beds, and turned out of his own private apartment. They were all so tired that they were thankful to lie anywhere, and went off to sleep at once, and did not awake until very late the next morning, wondering where they could be, and if all that had happened were a dream.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NARROW ESCAPE AND THE RESULTS.

AS soon as Charles Gordon and his three companions were well awake and fully realised their present fortunate position, they felt they could not be thankful enough for the unexpected piece of good luck, and had need to be grateful to the young lady who had so unwittingly been the means of their changed prospects. How dark and gloomy these had seemed, to be sure, but a few short hours before! The girl, in her turn, had cause to thank her preservers. It is certainly a very uncommon occurrence for two parties to be at the same time grateful to each other for the same act, and for both to be equally benefited by it. Indeed when such a thing does take place even the proverb of "the ill wind" and its consequences is not applicable.

They were indeed the girl's preservers, and they little knew from what they had saved her—if not from actual death, from something nearly as bad, if not worse: a life-long misery. For had she remained

with her father, her fate would have been more wretched than that of the fearful lot of the Hindoo widow.

Had this poor girl failed to escape after having left the harem, she would have been looked upon by her family as disgraced for ever. As it was, she was not so, as no one had seen her face, and that the chief knew. Mohamed Alli's gratitude to the officers knew no bounds; he told them he would be their friend for life, and if at any time they were in difficulties with any of the mountain tribes, I suppose he meant that if they were again rash enough to trust themselves in his country, and were again taken prisoners, the mention of his name would go far to release them. He also promised them that at any future time, no matter how distant, if he were alive and they required his services, they were to apply to him, and if it were necessary, he would command all the tribe under him to fight for them. He took a most solemn oath to show them he fully meant all he said. He then ordered the best refreshments that could be procured to be placed before them, not now in common earthen dishes, but in silver ones, which he begged them to accept when they had finished their repast. They accepted the gifts, but not for a very dignified reason—because they knew that otherwise the dishes would be thrown away; and one does not usually care to accept presents simply because they are of no further use to the donors. However, in a

country where the manners and customs are so different to our own, you have to look at things from a native point of view, and behave differently to what you would among your own countrymen. Wherever one is—even in barbarous lands—it is always well to remember that where no offence is intended none should be taken.

The silver dishes were the least valuable of the presents offered. The Englishmen assured the chief that they did not want any reward, and they had only performed a common act of kindness in saving the girl after her heartrending appeal to them for help and protection. Every Englishman is proud to be a deliverer and defender of the helpless. This was not very intelligible to the chief and his friends. The natives do not understand an English gentleman's inborn gallantry; it is a complete puzzle to them. Their ideas of women and their way of treating them are so opposed to our customs, that our notions are quite incomprehensible. Let us hope as civilisation advances, that they will understand the rightful place their women ought to take—as wives and mothers—in their own families and households.

Mohamed Alli gave each of his guests a pony and saddle. To Charles Gordon—whom he looked upon as the leader—he gave a curiously-made silver ornament, like a badge, rectangular; with an inscription. He told him to wear it round his neck whenever he was in those parts, and if in any real trouble

or difficulty to show it and use his name. This man had no small idea of his own power and influence.

Our friends accepted the ponies and the dishes, and Charles Gordon the charm, but firmly refused all other presents, beyond a common sheepskin coat of the country, which was put upon each of their ponies and would come in for their syces. All sorts of things, including jewellery and uncut stones, were pressed upon them, but they would not take anything more. They considered that they had earned the ponies, as they had done the chief a good service, and they deserved some compensation for the discomfort and bad treatment they had at first been subjected to.

They took their departure with quite as much ceremony and parade as the Governor-General and staff might expect to have, and *he* could not well have received much more attention than they did. A man to lead each pony was sent with them, with instructions to take the ponies on to Peshawur along with their own servants. A small number of armed men were sent to escort them to Abazaie, so as to ensure their safe arrival there. They were glad of this escort, as the road would certainly be very unsafe after the fight of the night before. The infuriated Fudjoo Khan was no doubt preparing for a regular battle with his late friend,—but now bitter enemy, Mohamed Alli.

It is dreadful to contemplate the consequences of the expedition in which our three friends were unwilling participants ; it is scarcely possible to calculate the amount of bloodshed and misery that is likely to ensue from it ; and in all such cases it is on the descendants, and consequently on the innocent, that the punishment falls.

Gordon and his companions were very thankful to be outside the gate, and have done with all the—to them—unmeaning and wearying forms and ceremonies which were gone through ; ceremonies meaningless to the impatient Englishman, but as natural as their dinner to the inhabitants of the East. They rode the ponies, followed by the armed men, some on horseback, and about twenty on foot—quite a small cavalcade ; and their arrival with such pomp at Abazaie rather astonished Colonel Sealy. The Colonel had been very anxious about them, knowing what daring, fearless men they all were ; and as they had not returned that evening he naturally thought something had gone wrong. In fact, had they not made their appearance that day, he intended ordering out some sowars to scour the country for them.

They arranged to go back to Peshawur on the 30th, and spend the intervening days in duck-shooting on the river and shooting any game in the vicinity of the fort that they could. They had received a good lesson for their rashness, and had passed

the most memorable Christmas day in all their lives ; one they would never forget.

When they returned to Abazaic it was the evening of the 26th. The next day, Saturday, they spent in loitering about, and routing out a renowned boatman who was famous for making rafts of pigskins. They wanted one made so as to be able to go up and down the river comfortably, and to stop anywhere they liked for shooting, or from which they could shoot ducks. They had great difficulty in finding the man they wanted, as the names of these people resemble each other so much—that is to untutored English ears. What with Ahmed Khan, Ahmed Alli, and a whole string of Khans and Allis with other prefixes to them, they could never remember which was which, and possibly the final name made all the difference.

They all went off in different directions to find the boatman. Hale went to Shubkuddur to ask Colonel Carter there if he knew where this hero of pigskin rafts was to be found. Colonel Carter had heard of the man ; and his daughter, who possessed the memory of the family, knew all about him, and told Mr. Hale that he was living just outside the fort, and she would show him where he was to be found, if he would wait for her. He told her he would only be too glad to wait any time ; he was *bon cavalier* enough to prefer a young lady companion to a solitary walk, a great advantage too in his search

because she could speak the language, and he could not. Flora Carter was equipped for the walk ; her toilette did not engage much of her time or attention, it would have been unnecessary indeed in that wild region. She wore nothing but a plain, short, stuff walking dress, and jacket, and in it she looked like what she was—a simple, straightforward English girl.

They found the man's house with little difficulty, and he promised to make them a raft by the next day, of eight or ten pigskins "which would be large enough," the man said, "to carry the four sahibs and the miss sahib too, if she was going to accompany them down the river."

Hale noticed that the girl brightened up when the boatman alluded to her, and that her face fell, as she said almost sadly, "I shall not be there;" so it struck him that she would like to go too. Hale arranged with the boatman to have the raft at the fort of Abazaie by noon the next day.

Before taking leave of Miss Carter, he asked her if she would like to accompany him and his friends on the raft the next day, and if she would honour them with her presence they would, he knew, be glad to see her. It will not perhaps do to inquire as to the young gentleman's thoughts as he said so much. As regards the exigencies of polite society—possibly the outer barbarians are better than we are, at least they tell their falsehoods without disguise of any

kind ; whilst civilisation requires “polite lies” or “fibs”—a distinction without a difference.

Flora said she should like it above all things, but did not know whether her father would allow her to go. “Do you mind asking him ?” she said. Robert Hale could do nothing now but accede, his mind misgiving him all the time as to the wisdom of taking the girl with them, and picturing to himself Charles Gordon’s face of horror when he should hear they were to have a young lady companion ; the other two might vote her a “bore” but say little more. Hale accompanied Miss Flora up to the fort again to find her father, who at last, after some persuasion from her, agreed to his daughter’s going on the raft, provided Hale promised to bring her home by five o’clock.

The old Colonel was very fond of his only daughter, and did not like to deny her anything, but his conscience told him her mother would not have permitted her to join such a trip, had she been alive. However, he tried to make excuses for himself. “Poor girl,” he said, “she has a dull time of it here in this old mud fort, and if she were not a good, steady, dutiful daughter she would not endure her life cooped up as she is here ; but she always finds some occupation, and never confesses to being dull.” He thought, too, he could trust that young Mr. Hale when he promised so faithfully to take care of her.

Robert Hale was congratulated by his unsuccessful companions on his return when they found how his search had succeeded ; but when he told the sequel—the advent of the young lady as well as the raft—Gordon made a very wry face, saying, “ You are a fellow, to be sure, to bring a girl on a shooting expedition, and on such a one too, and of all days on a Sunday ! I am ashamed of you.”

Gordon’s bark was worse than his bite ; he did not really mind half so much as he made out, and Robert knew his friend’s ways.

The raft was ready and at the fort before the time ; so the four started on a trial trip for an hour accompanied by Doon Alli, the celebrated boatman. When they returned they found Miss Carter waiting for them, and, after being duly introduced to them all by her friend Robert Hale, she was given a piece of carpet to sit upon in the centre of the raft, and the four gentlemen seated themselves at the sides. Doon Alli and his son at the corners, standing and guiding the raft, away they went slowly up the stream.

I am afraid most English mothers will think this Miss Carter “ very fast,” after this proceeding, but she was far from being so, and I have already described her. She could have no chaperone, and it was hard she could not have some fun occasionally to enliven her dreary life ; no one either could expect the colonel to torture himself by sitting cramped up,

tailor-fashion, at his age, on a pigskin raft! There was little room for him either.

Flora was enjoying it immensely; the sort of boating was a novel sensation to her. Robert and Fuller talked to her, and Fuller was particularly struck by her conversation with Doon Alli, who seemed to be an old ally of hers, for she chaffed him, and talked in a most animated way to the old grey-bearded Pathan. She would scarcely have ventured to talk so freely had she known she was understood; she would have been far too shy to have done so, and was much more at home with him than with her countrymen.

They had been a good two hours and a half going up the river, when Hale, remembering his promise to take Miss Carter home by five o'clock, suggested their return; they would, he knew, take half the time going back, as they would be with the current, and so would soon float down stream; but they had a ride of some miles after landing at Abazaie. The raft had only just been turned when Flora became very excited, and after a short parley with the boatman she turned to Robert, and asked him if he and the other gentlemen would be frightened if they went down the rapids.

"We are not likely to be so frightened as you will be, Miss Carter," said Hale; "it will be a very rash proceeding to go down those rapids on this gimcrack thing; why the strings that bind the skins

together might give way in the middle, and where should we be then?—dashed to pieces against the rocks."

Nothing would convince Miss Carter that it was extremely dangerous; of course Hale and his companions declared, for their credit sake, that they were not afraid on their own account. Charles Gordon especially did his best to dissuade her, for he had a great horror of fainting ladies; and when he looked at the falls down which she wanted to go, he felt sure that the very bravest lady must faint, so great would be the shock of the rapid descent through that hissing foaming water to the river below, with such dangerous rocks on either side. He remonstrated with the boatman and the young lady in vain; in spite of himself he could not help admiring her for her bravery.

Doon Alli was determined to please Miss Carter, and took no notice of the appeals of the gentlemen to him; he simply told them to "hold on tight," and had no sooner done so than he gave a terrific yell, answered by his son, and they felt themselves whirling round and round, water dashing over their heads, and the boatman, in the cleverest way keeping them from the rocks by a stroke that to the others seemed magical, of his long oar. The two men kept up a prolonged yell, which seemed to aid the rapid movement of their oars, and guided the frail raft wonderfully to keep it from being dashed

against the rocks. Had one of the oars missed its aim, they were a doomed crew, for they would certainly have been drowned and dashed to pieces by the angry foaming waters against the rocks.

It was all over in two minutes, but the sensation of those two minutes was curious enough to be impressed on them for life. They clutched the sticks attached to the pigskins with all their might, and could hardly have held on any longer.

Charles Gordon could not keep his opinion of Miss Carter to himself; he burst out with "You are a brave girl!" and looked at her with genuine admiration, for not a sound escaped her. He felt he had indeed maligned her when he thought she was going to faint.

They soon reached Abazaie, when Miss Carter mounted her pony and Hale walked beside her. Fuller also accompanied them. They were at the fort as the gong was beaten five times, indicating five o'clock. When the young men told Colonel Carter what they had done, his face beamed with satisfaction and pride; but he told them he was very glad he did not know of the mad freak until it was over, and did not think he would have allowed his daughter to go had he known.

"Blame me, papa, it was all my fault," she exclaimed; but he did not look as if he were going to blame anybody, so proud did he seem of his brave daughter.

The colonel invited the young men to come, as soon as they could get leave again, and stay at Shub-kuddur with him, and he promised to show them some sport. "He had a shikaree of his own," he said, "who would go out with them." They gladly accepted his invitation, and said they would try and get a week's leave the following month, before the inspections came off.

The whole way home Fuller could talk of nothing but of Flora Carter—her "cleverness" and "her pluck;" and added, "he should try and pay Shub-kuddur a visit very soon."

When they returned to Abazaie they found Miss Carter had left her parasol behind, and Fuller, of course, volunteered to take it to her the next day. He was glad of the excuse to see her again. That was occupation enough for him, and the others pottered about on the raft and bagged some wild fowl and ducks, and Gordon was lucky enough to shoot an oobhārā.

They reached Peshawur on the evening of the 30th, in time for mess, having passed as eventful a week as they could well have expected, and had much to talk about. They were quite heroes, now, in the eyes of the ladies at Peshawur.

Mrs. Munro and Mrs. Chaplin were immensely amused with Robert Hale's stories, and he confided to them what he felt sure would be the result of the raft escapade, but they were not to say a word about it, as

it might get to Colonel Thompson's ears, who might not approve of one of his lieutenants having a love affair, and so might spoil Fuller's fun by stopping his leave.

"In love and war all is fair, you know," he said; "and Colonel Thompson is just the man to refuse Fuller leave; and think he has a right grand excuse for it. He is not fond of granting leave at any time, I believe. Besides," he added, "the girl will suit Fuller admirably."

"I did not know you were a match-making young man before," replied Edith Chaplin, laughing. "Do the lovers know the protector they have in you?"

"You need not call them lovers, Mrs. Chaplin; it has not come to that yet."

Mrs. Chaplin told Hale that their ball was fixed for the 4th, and as she had undertaken to superintend the floral decorations she expected him to help her; and he was to hunt in the bazaar among the stores of the "kupra wallahs" (cloth-merchants), for coloured muslin, and among the "box wallah" curiosities for tinsel paper, as she wanted to make the old dingy mess-room as bright as possible; and she wished it to be so entirely metamorphosed, that no one should recognise it again. Hale's hands were full during the few days that elapsed before the ball was to come off. He turned the bazaar nearly upside down, obeying Mrs. Chaplin's behests. Mrs. Munro had undertaken to superintend the arrangement of the supper, which

is always better if not left entirely to the native servants, who have always such a fancy for making cream of smoked milk, and putting rancid butter into the cakes. In these matters they are not to be trusted, especially mess khansamahs, who are not generally so well drilled as those in the service of an English lady; the officers being more in the habit, than a lady is, of leaving their dinner to chance and the khansamah, and letting him have his own way entirely.

Colonel Lindsay expected his wife and daughter to arrive the day before the ball; they had been very unexpectedly delayed, first at starting, then at Bombay, so they were a month after the original time they fixed for reaching Peshawur. There was great excitement among the young officers of the 39th on the subject of Miss Lindsay's prospective arrival, as they were so afraid of some other delay, and were most anxious that she should make her first appearance in public at the ball of the regiment.

Mrs. and Miss Lindsay did arrive just in time, as they reached Peshawur the day before the ball, and only managed so much by coming straight through from Lahore without halting anywhere—a long and tiring journey.

CHAPTER IX.

THE REGIMENTAL BALL.

“WHAT a funny child you are, Alice; you seem as indifferent about the ball as if you had been to them all your life, and were tired of them. I can well remember my first ball. I thought of nothing else for weeks before, and days after; and you go about the house in the most collected way, unpacking and arranging your things, and seem to forget all about the ball to-night.”

“No, mother, I have not forgotten it, but I do not think I shall care much about it. I would so much rather go to bed.”

“Don’t talk stuff, go to bed indeed! after our tearing up here at the sacrifice of comfort and rest to be in time for the ball, and now you wish to go to bed instead! Really, you are aggravating. I am the one, and not you, who might wish to go to bed; and I do too—for that dâk gharree journey has tired and shaken me dreadfully.”

"I am very sorry, mother dear, but I am sure I wish you had travelled more quietly, and not hurried on this account; but I suppose father would have been disappointed had we not been in time."

"Yes, that he would, and all the others in the regiment too, you may be sure; of course they wished their colonel's daughter to be at their ball, and fresh from England too. You will enjoy it well enough when you get there; but do go and see about your dress," her mother added. "If you leave it to the ayah, she will be putting all kinds of wrong bows and flowers out to wear with it. These creatures are colour-blind, I think; they certainly do not know the colours by their right names, and will call everything blue and red that comes as near it as brown and purple."

"I will go soon and unpack the box with the evening dresses; but which dress do you wish me to wear?" inquired Alice.

"Your white silk of course—for your first ball—with the pink moss-rosebuds and lilies; and do try and wake up a little before you go. I know that horrid journey must have tired you; and I must say I wish the ball had not been fixed for to-night. However, I would rather it had been last night even, than have missed it altogether."

"I am sure I wouldn't," Alice answered *sotto voce*, as she saw her mother would be really annoyed if she showed any more dislike to going. "It is ungrateful

of me too," she thought to herself ; for after all, her mother was only thinking of her pleasure, and it was for this she made the long journey ; and she then and there resolved to do her best at least to appear to enjoy the prospect of the ball. Alice's resolve was a good one ; for young people are very apt to forget, or not notice how often their parents put their own pleasures and conveniences aside for theirs.

Alice was a strange girl in some ways, indeed, compared to the ordinary run of young ladies she was quite peculiar ; for her caring so little about the ball was no affectation ; she never had had any fancy for them. Most girls look forward so to the time when they are to come out, as it is called, and think everything is to be delightful then, and quite *couleur de rose*. No more horrid school-room and lessons, these can all go to the winds. Now they can go to balls and parties, and picnics and dances, and be courted and admired. This is every girl's dream who goes to India, at least, I am quite sure.

But such thoughts had never entered Alice's head ; she never looked forward to the day when her lessons would end, and wished it could be postponed for a little while longer.

Seventeen years is a very short time for a woman's education, when one thinks of the mission she has to fulfil in life. Alice was no dull bookworm either ; she was a bright, merry girl, full of life and fun, all in

a natural way, and she seemed to run in her own groove, which was not so regularly carved as those of most young ladies. She spoke her mind freely, and usually said what she meant—not quite the way to get on in the world always; yet it is refreshing to see a girl sometimes different to the cut and dried type of modern society. Alice Lindsay was shy too but no affected shyness—it was real feminine modesty and was the secret of the charm about her, which all felt who came in contact with her.

Shyness in these days is refreshing, not unlike a bank of ferns and cool rippling water to the eye when on a hot summer's day, it turns from the dust and glare of the road. Alice Lindsay was a handsome girl, tall and fair, and there was something very striking in her appearance; she had an air of unconscious *hauteur* too.

The long-expected evening of the 4th had come, and at the prescribed and fashionable hour of ten o'clock all the lady guests had arrived. The officers, and senior ladies of the 39th were of course there early, in order to receive their guests.

Balls in India begin as a rule even later than they do in England, which is a pity, as it is far into the small hours before they break up; three or four o'clock for returning home is not thought at all late. Officers have been known to go straight from the ball-room to parade. The officers of the 39th wished their ball to begin early, and so the invitations were

issued for nine o'clock, and they had also asked their lady guests to be punctual ; some did respond, and came soon after nine o'clock, but at half-past there were only enough to form one quadrille. The colonel opened the ball with the general's wife, and the general himself danced with Miss Lindsay. This ball was to be quite the event of the winter, so far as the gaieties were concerned, it had been looked forward to and prepared for, for so long by all the fair sex.

The ladies who had been some time in India, and had not been fortunate enough to receive boxes from home, had to put their wits to work to renovate and modernise their dresses, or make new ones, as the case might be ; and their construction was an occupation which monopolised a considerable portion of their time, and was even welcomed by the idle ones as furnishing means of frittering away the hours, which in India it is so hard to kill.

I think if any one had cared to know what some of these ladies were going to wear at the ball, they could easily have found out by paying a few morning calls, as their dirzees had been hard at work on the frills and flounces for some time. The dirzees (native tailors) sit in the verandah, which must be passed through to enter any of the rooms of the bungalow ; and as their ordinary place for working is generally just outside the drawing-room door, the work they are employed upon is necessarily seen by visitors. The usual front entrance is one of the drawing-room doors.

Anything in the shape of a front door, leading into an entrance-hall, is seldom to be found in an up-country bungalow; and as all the rooms lead into each other, and nearly every one has doors leading into the verandah, which circumvents the house, it is sometimes difficult unless you know a house, to discover unaided the right door to drive up to. It certainly was so at Peshawur, where the bungalows are very badly built, and not nearly so large and comfortable as many down country. They give the idea of having been run up in a great hurry, and intended originally for bachelors, each one apparently having been added to in its turn as the lady inhabitants increased. Nearly all have gardens of some sort, laid out according to the taste of the inmates of the house. Everything grows quickly in India, and with so little trouble—little or no cultivation is required—that seed is no sooner sown than it springs up, and a newly-made garden is quickly full of flowers and vegetables. You seem to see the actual growth of each plant, not so rapidly perhaps as the beanstalk grows in the pantomime under your eye, but wonderfully quickly, for the difference of a single night is plainly visible.

The recollection of these verandah-made ball-dresses makes one realise a little how public is the life of a private individual in India. Let us try and imagine what our feelings would be if, before a ball in England, all our lady and gentleman friends were to

see the dresses we were going to wear, half made, and in the hands of a man too. Yet strange though the notion, that which appears odd in one country is often so natural in another. Certainly Indian life breaks through the ice, and knocks down the barriers of many of our island prejudices. Old Indians as a rule are so much more genial, and less stiff than the untravelled and home-staying Briton. A reason why, I suppose, they get on so much better with foreigners than do other Englishmen.

Notwithstanding this advantage, life in India would suit many people better, and be far pleasanter to refined Englishwomen than it is, if they could shut their doors and live more to themselves than they are able to do. It is very trying to have prying eyes always upon you ; to have no privacy of any sort. All your private rooms seem—before you accustom yourself to them—like entrance halls. They have doors all round which are kept open, with merely a curtain hung on a pole across the open door about half-way up ; a necessity in the hot weather to afford free ventilation. Conversation in one room can be heard throughout the house. Hence the vagrant ways of Anglo-Indian children ; they roam all over the house, and spend most of their time in the verandah.

But this is a long digression ; we must return to the ball, which was in nowise different to any other military ball in an up-country station in India. There was the usual display of arms and trophies

on the walls, the usual long mess-room, on the floor a stretched canvas, and the walls covered half-way up with coloured muslin decorated and festooned with flowers. There was a great deal of spirit about this particular ball, owing to the large number of the ladies who danced, for several had come in from Nowshera, and even one or two from Rawul Pindie. There were quite forty ladies dancing—as many as were wanted to keep the ball afoot, and even to allow them to rest occasionally. The floor of an Indian ball-room is very different to an English one; the former is stone and consequently very tiring to the feet, there being no spring in it at all; thus it is no joke to dance the whole night without sitting down. The effect to be feared on the following day is less exhaustion than foot weariness.

Quite the excitement of the evening was the appearance of Miss Lindsay, the colonel's daughter; her first appearance and her first ball. The colonel was so great a favourite that all the officers vied with each other in trying to make it—in her honour—the best ball that had ever been given in the regiment. They did not seem to have failed in their endeavours, to judge by the satisfaction depicted on the faces of the dancers, and the remarks you heard as you threaded your way through them.

“Gordon, what a fellow you are, to be sure! You have been standing in this corner all the evening

and not attempted to dance. Why do you not go and ask Miss Lindsay for a dance?" said Hale.

"I leave that to you, and would willingly resign my turn in your favour had I one. Besides, I should not have much chance of a dance with her now. I expect her card was full five minutes after she arrived."

"You are right there. I was five minutes late and could only get number eighteen. Rather a bore for her, I should think, being obliged to dance with such a heap of strangers."

"Yes, she could not have seen one of her partners before. I have been watching Miss Lindsay for some time, and from the observations I have made I have come to the conclusion that balls are not in her line at all. She looks though as if she danced well. What an air of refinement she has! There is such a *distinguée* air about her, an unconscious *hauteur*, so different to all the other women in the room."

"What has come to you to-night? Gordon, you do astonish me! Fancy your taking notes and making observations of a lady, you, the professed woman-avoider, if not hater. You, who always keep out of the way of ladies of all sorts—except at balls, when you do sometimes condescend to dance—to employ yourself in judging Miss Lindsay's character."

"Hush, Robert; don't, for goodness' sake, talk any more rubbish; half the fun of a ball is—when one is

not dancing oneself—to criticise those who are, and to think what fools they are for their pains. No wonder that the natives gaze at us in amazement and cannot make out why we men should take so much trouble, and go through so much exercise in such a silly way."

"Yes, all they do is to lounge in comfortable attitudes whilst others dance for their amusement; rather different to our mode, certainly."

"Here comes Miss Lindsay on Chaplin's arm; what a handsome pair they make, and what a contrast she is to his own wife—pretty as she is too. Now do you not see what I mean? she is not a bit like a girl at her first ball, she seems so much above it, and not part of it. Yet with all her *grande dame* air she looks shy too."

"Well, Gordon, I must leave you to your own reflections now, as this is my dance with Mrs. Chaplin; and I hope I shall take Miss Lindsay in to supper, which ought to be ready after number eighteen. By-by."

"Robert! come back, I want to speak to you for a minute." Hale came back very unwillingly, as he saw Mrs. Chaplin looking out for him.

"If supper does not come off after the eighteenth dance and you do not take in Miss Lindsay yourself, do introduce me to her for supper?"

"Really, Gordon, your conceit beats everything," said Hale, very much amused. "Do you suppose she will give up her partner at the time to go in with

you?—but to oblige you I will see what I can do." After saying this away he flew, and received a scolding from his friend Mrs. Chaplin for keeping her waiting so long. "I had very nearly danced with Captain G——," she said, "and it would have served you right had I done so." However, they soon made peace, and in token of forgiveness she promised him another dance after supper.

Not the least energetic dancer was the general himself, and he looked as if he danced well too, nor was he in the least awkward either in spite of his one arm. Miss O'Dowd enjoyed herself very much; she danced several times with her friend Mr. Brown of the 20th N.I.—the young man who had arrived on the scene in such an *à propos* manner after the gharree break-down, and prevented Mrs. Vivian and herself from spending a night by the road-side.

Miss O'Dowd was less expectant since her visit to the hills; for there I imagine she did not receive exclusive attention from the male sex, and so came to appreciate what was offered to her. Lieutenants Jones and Brown were more attentive to her than any one else; but unfortunately they had only their pay to live upon, and therefore were not of much account in the matrimonial market. Still, young men with only their pay are not always to be despised; for if steady and careful, they can manage on their pay well enough in the native regiments,

and when they get an appointment in the regiment can marry on it too.

This change in Miss O'Dowd's expectations or pretensions since we first knew her, had improved her. And though her partners at this ball did not include any above the rank of lieutenant, being mostly junior lieutenants or ensigns, she was far from unlucky to get them as partners in a crowded ball like this, where there were so many pretty married ladies.

The young married ladies in India are often more sought after for partners than the unmarried girls ; they have more to say for themselves, for one thing. It was very unusual though, even at Peshawur, to have only two girls at a ball where there were between forty and fifty ladies, and with the exception of three or four, all dancers.

Charles Gordon was still standing in the corner where he had talked to Robert Hale, and appeared to be intent on watching the dancers, when he heard his name, and felt his arm touched. He turned round ; Hale then and there introduced Miss Lindsay to him, and left her with him. Gordon offered his arm, saying, "May I take you in to supper ?"

The door of the supper-room was open. It was rather an informal and off-hand way, certainly, of introducing a young lady to a gentleman—walking her up to him in that fashion, just as if *she* had

wished and asked for the introduction and not he. Hale had explained to her that his friend Gordon wished to take her into supper, and asked her to allow him to introduce him, to which she agreed ; then they had walked past Gordon, and on a sudden impulse the introduction was made.

Gordon at the moment was rather astonished to find himself with Miss Lindsay on his arm. They neither of them spoke until they reached the supper-room, but after Gordon had procured for her the refreshment she wanted, the ice seemed broken, and they found their tongues.

I think Englishmen generally, unless they are very hungry and greedy, do find it easier to talk to a stranger in the intervals of eating. What they said to each other that evening is not worth recording. They did not get beyond the merest commonplaces ; and yet Charles Gordon left Alice Lindsay when her next partner claimed her, with his first impression of her more fully confirmed, viz., that she was unlike most other girls, that she did not seem to care very much for balls, and that she was shy.

He could not help saying to himself in his cynical way, "I wonder how long she will remain as *she* is in this infernal country. I hope she will not get like most of them out here—a flirting, gadding-about, frivolous lot."

When proud, scornful Charles Gordon gives way

to such thoughts as these he shows the worst side of his character—the hard, bitter, cynical side which hides so much that is good, as the foul earth does the hidden ore. Still, this outburst showing that he is touched marks a change. He the woman despiser, to trouble himself about a girl of seventeen! But surely all ladies in India are not such as he describes in his sweeping condemnation. Is it not that some fair lady has played him false, and so caused the bitter speeches that ooze out sometimes?

This was the case. Charles Gordon had loved, and very deeply too, a pretty little simple girl when he was but twenty, and she only "sweet seventeen." She appeared devoted to him, but after they had been engaged six months she threw him over for another man. This man was far richer than Gordon, but a great contrast to him. A miserable, insignificant creature, twenty years older than the girl—she had been made to marry him by her mother. This is what some mothers have to answer for—yet the girl took all the blame herself. Gordon had never forgiven or forgotten her, or the happy sunshine in which he basked during the six months' engagement, which was like April sunshine, so fitful yet cheering whilst it lasted. This had soured and hardened him and shaken his faith in women: he had so loved her and

believed implicitly in her love. He would have pitied her though could he have seen her now, and known the unhappy, miserable life she led.

But matrimony is indeed, a lottery—

“Of earthly goods, the best is a good wife;
A bad, the bitterest curse of human life.”

CHAPTER X.

SPORTS AND PASTIMES.

THERE was hardly a creature to be seen on the malle the morning after the ball, except perhaps a doctor or so going his hospital rounds and the officers on duty going to inspect the commissariat rations or the soldiers' breakfasts. The first week of the new year was to be a very gay one at Peshawur; there was something going on every day. The day after the ball a grand polo match was to take place against the players from Pindee. It was fixed for that day as they had come in for the ball and some of the players were obliged to return that evening. Since polo has been played in England, we know more about it in these parts than we did. It is a game that was introduced into India from the hills, and it has been played for centuries by some of the hill tribes, and is particularly suited to small men. Light weights only ought to play it; otherwise it is a cruelty to animals, as the ponies must necessarily be very small, and therefore

it is seldom heavy men find ponies up to their weight. Gordon never attempted to play polo—good horseman as he was—for he was such a strongly-built, big man, that he always said “he could screw a pony a game, and that would neither suit his pocket nor his feelings; in fact, he should feel himself to be an utter brute if he attempted it.” Cruelty to the lower orders of creation could not be attributed to him.

Gordon’s amusements were hunting, cricket and shooting. Robert Hale was one of the best players of his side, the Valley Team, which was a good match for the Northern Team, and many a goal did either side gain.

The match was to be the best out of five games, and each game consisted in the best out of five goals. Each side had won two games, and they were playing the conqueror when Hale’s pony bolted with him and went right away home. The pony had the temper of a little devil and a mouth of iron, and when roused, no power on earth could stop him, when he had his head turned towards his stable. In spite of Hale’s horsemanship, just as he was turning the corner of the road leading into his bungalow, the pony gave a sudden shy which threw the rider, with his head against the stone parapet of the bridge leading to the gate of the compound. He was stunned for a short time. His bearer seeing the pony run in without a rider, went

to the gate to look for his master, whom he found lying, as he at first thought, dead. He knelt down to listen if there were any signs of breathing, and finding that there were, called another servant, and the two carried their master, put him down on his bed, and bathed his head with water.

In a few minutes the Munros arrived; they were in their carriage watching the game when the pony ran away with Hale, and as there was no sign of Robert's return they thought they would drive and see what had become of him. Major Munro went into the young man's room and found him in a swoon, but he was more life-like than when the bearer first saw him. Major Munro sent the man off for one of the doctors, and told him to bring any doctor he could find at home, and then took his wife in to see him, saying, "You are almost as good as a doctor, dear, so you had better come and see what you can do for Robert until the 'professional' arrives."

"I am sure you know, dear, as much as I do about doctoring, only you do not like taking the sole responsibility on your own shoulders; that is it, isn't it, old fellow?—you always like me to share your difficulties and so get half the blame."

"You always have a full share of the glory and pleasures too, so you ought not to complain."

"Yes, I know I do, and I think more than my share of those, and a very full portion of love and

kindness," said Mrs. Munro, looking fondly at her husband.

Hale was as white as the sheet on which he was lying. When Mrs. Munro went into his room she gave quite a start, he looked so ghastly. However, she controlled herself and immediately told the bearer to be quick and bring some brandy, and poured some very strong brandy and water down the sick man's throat, telling the bearer to rub his feet while her husband chafed his hands. The brandy had the desired effect ; Robert opened his eyes, and consciousness seemed to be coming back slowly but surely.

At this juncture the doctor rushed in. It was perhaps fortunate for Robert that he had had Mrs. Munro as a doctor before this gentleman arrived.

Dr. Magee, a good-humoured if somewhat brusque Irishman attached to one of the native regiments in the absence of their own doctor on furlough, had a strange mania for thinking that all his patients must have something the matter with their eyes. No matter what their complaint was, he always first asked them after their eyes ; just in the same way as many medicos have a trick of telling their patients to put out their tongues, even if they have nothing much more than a finger-ache the matter with them.

Dr. Magee's was very negative treatment too ; he always tried to make out that the patient who

sent for him was not ill at all, or at least had only an eye-ache. And when the matter could no longer be disputed on any grounds, he would prescribe handsomely a dose of no trifling proportions, of a mixture of quinine, sarsaparilla and rhubarb, each intended to cure different complaints, and so quite antagonistic to each other. By doing this he thought he was certain to be on the right side, and be sure to hit the right nail on the head in some fashion. For instance, if the patient was suffering from neuralgia or great weakness there was the quinine; if from other complaints there was due provision in the other two medicines. This at all events was the gossip or more probably the chaff of the messroom; and it may be taken for granted was largely exaggerated from the actual facts either of his negative treatment or his generous doses.

Fortunately for Hale he was treated under the system of negation, which consisted in an order to be still until he was better, and he would soon be well that way,—an Irish order truly! The doctor wished him good-by, apparently quite satisfied with himself, and was gone like the whirlwind, as though he had to visit every one in the station.

Mrs. Munro, as soon as the doctor was out of the room, could not help exclaiming! “What a mercy Robert was better when he came, and had us with him. That gentleman evidently thought he was shamming. Have you met him

before, dear? Are there many as hasty as he seems to be?"

"No, to both your questions, my dear," the major answered. "Make your mind easy," he added with a laugh; "gentlemen such as he do little harm, although it is perhaps fortunate he has no regular appointment. The fact is, he is one of a few who are behind their age and past their work; and it is only through the good-natured connivance of the inspector-general of hospitals that one of them gets a temporary charge, such as our friend now has, to allow him to dawdle out his time for his pension."

"Is it not a great shame?" inquired the wife, with the indignation natural to a woman, on hearing of such an arrangement.

"Well it is, and it is not," was the husband's answer. "His stay is short, and his bark worse than his bite. He gets his step, and the arrangement permits a hardworked man to get a spell of rest. But come, dear, attend to your patient, he may want you."

The Munros did not leave Robert until he was much better, and then they told the bearer to put up his things, and himself to come over to their bungalow, for that night in any case. They knew the poor youth would otherwise be all alone, as he was not fit for mess, and his head might get bad; and the good, kind people always thought of everything that could do good to others.

The Blue Scarves or Valley Team lost the match. They were winning before Hale's pony ran away with him. They either had no more luck or else their hearts failed them and they lost their spirit when their best player was gone, for after that time they did not make another goal ; so the Red Scarves or Northern Team were victorious. Their victory, though, was hardly won—some little satisfaction to the vanquished. There is more credit in being hardly beaten than in winning an unequal victory. So soon as the game was over, the players rode up to the dressing tent, put on their coats and comforters, had the blankets put on their panting and hot ponies, and then strolled up to where the ladies were sitting, and the band was playing. The artillery band was doing duty on this day, and a gay sight the polo ground was, in the middle of the afternoon, with the bright red and blue scarves flying about on ponies of various hues, swinging their sticks and shouting to their companions. There were twelve playing on each side. Then there was a number of carriages of all sorts, from the general's barouche and the Munros' Victoria phaeton to the various tea-carts, tum-tums and buggies, as well as several fair equestrians.

Mrs. Chaplin was riding with her husband, and Gordon was with them that afternoon—rather unusual for him to be seen riding with a lady. He had taken off his hat to Miss Lindsay and asked her how

she was after the ball, and passed on, as the colonel's carriage was beset by a whole heap of youngsters, "and he was not going to talk to a lady in a crowd like that," he said to himself. The colonel was walking about, but after the game was over, he came up with the general to the carriage, and took his wife and daughter to the refreshment tent, to have tea or coffee, which had been prepared for the lady spectators. This was the polo club entertainment, in honour of their match against the team from Rawul Pindie.

Mrs. Chaplin asked Gordon if he had seen Robert Hale's pony running away with him, and he answered that he had turned to follow him, when he found the Munros were going to look after him. Then he added, very bitterly, "What a lucky fellow he is to have some one to care for him, and people like the Munros too; for they could hardly be kinder were they his parents."

"Yes, they are very good to him, but so they are to all," said Mrs. Chaplin. "I can never forget what Mrs. Munro did for me when I was ill in the hot weather."

Here their conversation was interrupted by one of the players, an officer of the 4th Bengal cavalry, bringing Mrs. Chaplin a cup of coffee. The players in the match all belonged to the artillery and cavalry with the exception of Hale and Brown, who represented the European and native infantry. There

were other players in the infantry, but the best players only were chosen for the match.

It was dusk when the game was over, and after the tea and coffee, or soda-water and lemonade had been partaken of, both players and spectators dispersed. There was to be a large dinner that night at the artillery mess.

The next day, the other European regiment, the 58th, gave a large ladies' dinner party out of compliment to Mrs. and Miss Lindsay, who were the honoured guests. After dinner an impromptu dance was got up, so far impromptu, that although there was a canvas stretched in one of the rooms in readiness, it was unexpected by the guests, who had only been asked to the dinner to which very few bachelors outside the regiment had been asked—though many came in the evening for the dance. For as many ladies as possible, including the general's wife, the commissioner's wife, and all the other civilians had been invited.

There had been a cricket match in the afternoon which presented as gay a scene as the polo match of the day before, and with the same attraction. The next day there was a large garden party at the general's, to which all the station was asked—badminton and croquet being the diversions. The general's party was the closing dissipation of the week, and being Saturday, there was no evening entertainment. This had been a remarkably gay

time for Peshawur. The artillery talked of giving a ball, but that was in the horizon at present; so the gay butterflies would have time to go through the chrysalis stage again before bursting forth into gorgeous attire.

The soldiers' sports were to come off the next week; they were to have a regular performance, and prizes were to be given, for which subscriptions had been raised some time before. The competitors on these days were to be taken from every regiment in the place. The usual sports of the foot-soldiers were gone through on the first day, and were very tedious to witness. They were much the same kind—only not so good—as may be seen in a public school at home. The sports of the mounted branch were fixed for the second day, when there was a goodly assembly of ladies to witness them.

The principal performers were the men of the two Bengal cavalry regiments, and a sprinkling of artillerymen. These sports consisted of "naza bazi," or tent-pegging, lime-cutting, tilting at the ring and "gud ka bazi," or single-stick, on horseback. They were held on the parade ground of the 4th Bengal Cavalry, as it afforded the largest space of any. The men of the 4th were great experts at tent-pegging, and rode at the peg in a wild dashing way, giving a kind of prolonged yell which exploded into a shout if they were victorious in carrying off the peg at the end of the spear, which they whirled

triumphantly until it rested on a shoulder. The horses seemed to enjoy the sport as much as their riders, although they received many a blow—poor beasts, on their heads from an inexpert rider, who would constantly turn the spear sharp round on to the horse—but from such riders only.

Each man had three trials, and those who did not lift a peg at all, were out of it altogether; those who did do so, had to go on against each other until the best was left in. If one man in his first three trials took a peg out each time, he was the victorious one, unless another did the same, when they would of course be ties, and would be obliged to play them off.

After the tent-pegging came the lime-cutting. For this, limes or oranges were stuck on to sticks planted in the ground, and these the sowars had to cut with their swords as they passed at full gallop. Then came tilting at the ring, which all did well. The sowars belonging to the 4th Bengal Cavalry carried off every prize for "naza bazi," they were out and out the best at it. "Gud ka bazi" is a sort of single stick; very good practice, but very worrying to the horses, and is the cause of many disputes, as there are so many rules requiring on the umpire's part a very keen eye to detect which man has been hit, for they are apt to declare simultaneously that each has hit the other. In "gud ka bazi" the players are obliged to wear wire masks to protect their faces from

the blows of the sticks. There was the same sort of tent—there is a great similarity in all regimental entertainments—with chairs arranged outside for the ladies to sit upon, as has been before described; likewise tea and coffee supplied by the mess of the 4th, but no band, as native cavalry regiments do not boast one.

Miss Lindsay came with her father to see these sports; they did not dismount, but rode up and down and watched the games from their saddles. The colonel wanted his daughter to dismount and sit with the other ladies; but she preferred, she said, her horse as her companion; he at least would not require her to talk, and she was so tired of talking to the same people. The two ladies she would have to sit next to, Mrs. Green and Mrs. Lowther, "had" she declared "nothing to say for themselves," or at least can only talk of the ball, and think I can never tire of hearing what a good one they thought it, and how much they enjoyed it, and how popular the officers of the 39th were, and how they would be missed when they left, and all the rest of it."

The colonel laughed at his daughter's vehemence but he humoured her, saying, "You must have your own way I suppose, though you should get accustomed to vapid conversation, as no one in this country has much to talk about beyond passing events in the station. I fancy the babies form a fund for conversation among the married ladies; but they

would not think you would be interested to know how many more teeth Mrs. Green's baby has than Mrs. Lowther's."

"Well, papa, I think the babies would interest me as much as the everlasting ball, and 'how pretty Mrs. D.'s dress was.' I hate balls, and I do not wish to go to any more."

They had no opportunity of pursuing the conversation, for as Colonel Lindsay was about to reply, Gordon rode up to where they were, and remained with them. The colonel presently moved away to talk to a lady who had ridden up, the wife of one of the officers in the 4th cavalry, who pretended to know as much about the sowars and their horses, as if she were the adjutant himself. The lady amused Colonel Lindsay immensely, for she talked to him as if he could not possibly know anything about horses. I suppose she thought no one in an infantry regiment could be supposed to be conversant on the topic. To draw her out, the colonel, in his funny way, encouraged her in the belief, and feigned ignorance. Mrs. Townley was very matter-of-fact over it all, and did not see he was laughing at her. She told him the pedigree of the horse she was riding, and then questioned him about his own. At last she said, "Are you not afraid to ride that horse out hunting?"

"Why?" said the amused and good-natured colonel.

"Because he seems to be rather weak in his fore legs, and his knees look puffy and swollen."

This was too much for Colonel Lindsay's gravity. He could not restrain a laugh, but Mrs. Townley did not even then see he was laughing at her. He answered at last dryly and quietly, "Denmark is a weight carrier, Mrs. Townley, and up to fifteen stone, and I only weigh twelve stone, saddle and all. What you take for puffy knees are sinews and strength."

But Mrs. Townley was well known in the regiment for her affected though superficial knowledge of horses, and the colonel like the other gentlemen was careful not to undeceive her too abruptly—so he turned the conversation. The lady also thought herself a splendid rider, and far the best in the station. She asked Colonel Lindsay if his daughter was fond of riding, and when he told her "Alice had ridden all her life," suggested that they should meet on the parade ground one morning, and have a try at the ring together.

"What time do you ride in the morning, Mrs. Townley?"

"Oh, about eight o'clock these cold mornings, one's hands get so numb if one starts earlier."

"That is the hour I am always on parade, or on some duty, I go out every morning at eight; but of course any Thursday—the station holiday—I am at liberty, and if my daughter feels

inclined I will bring her next Thursday, will that suit you?"

"Oh! yes, any morning will do for me, Thursday is the best day, as we have the parade-ground to ourselves then."

"What a boon it was to us all when Lord F. instituted the Thursday holiday—the soldier's Sunday—I enjoy that morning as much as the youngest private, perhaps more. Alice is going to be my commanding officer on those days, so I shall not be so well off as the soldiers now."

Here Captain Townley rode up and carried off his wife; and when Colonel Lindsay looked round for his daughter, he could not see her at first, as she was not where he had left her, and a few minutes elapsed before he discovered her, in the dusk, riding up and down with Gordon. He cantered up to them saying, "Alice, Mrs. Townley has been amusing me so much that I almost forgot your existence!"

"You are a nice sort of a father," said Alice, laughing, "you certainly looked as if you were very much taken up with Mrs. Townley. Is not she the lady of the 4th who can talk of nothing but horses and the regiment? I heard Mrs. Munro speaking of her the other day, and she was pointed out to me at the ball."

"Yes, she is a little too much in that style, but she is rather fun all the same; by the by, I told her I

would take you on Thursday morning to have a try with her at the ring, if you felt inclined."

"I should like to try and gallop at the ring one morning, but I cannot go next Thursday."

"Why not, dear?"

"Because I have just promised Mr. Gordon that you and I would go to the race-course and see his horse taken round."

"Do you not think you are a presumptuous young lady to make plans for your father as if he were nothing more animate than 'Psycho?' What horse did you want me to see, Gordon?"

Charles Gordon had only heard a portion of the conversation between the colonel and his daughter, but enough to see there was some difficulty about his plan; he immediately said, "Oh! I hope it will not inconvenience you, sir, to come to the course on Thursday morning. Miss Lindsay said she was mistress of the ceremonies that morning, and could do with you as she pleased; so I ventured to ask if she would entice you to the race-course to see 'Plutarch' go round. I want to enter him for the Waler's handicap, at the spring meeting."

"You will ruin your horse if you race him."

"Do you think so, sir? Hale is going to ride him round for me; I am too heavy to train him."

"I would come in a moment, only I made a sort of engagement with Mrs. Townley, but I suppose we

can put it off. Alice, can't we manage to ask her to come with us too?" and turning to Gordon, he added, "She is a grand judge of a horse, and would help you better than I can. At all events I feel dumbfounded before her. She has informed me that my horse is not up to my weight, and has made me quite nervous!"

"After that," replied Gordon, laughing, "we will dispense with her opinion, if not with her company; the latter, Miss Lindsay must decide."

"I do not think we need ask her, father. She would be rather in our way perhaps. I can ride with her any other morning as you made no actual promise."

It was decided that they should accede to Gordon's wish and meet on the course. Gordon had got over his shyness with Miss Lindsay, and in truth was astonished at himself when he found how little effort it required to speak to her as compared with other ladies.

CHAPTER XI.

MORNING VISITS.

THE balls and parties, and the sports and pastimes being over, the English in Peshawur subsided into the usual routine of their daily life. The days were passed, as far as the time was concerned, much as they are at home. Day is not turned into night, nor night into day, as in the hot weather. It was possible to play badminton and croquet all the afternoon without fear of sunstroke, and the games usually began between three and four o'clock, or as soon after tiffin as possible. The ordinary hour for the meal in the winter is two o'clock, as up to that time you are liable to be invaded by visitors. From twelve until two are the visiting hours for visits of ceremony; only your intimate friends call in the afternoon. They come to see you, and do not heartily wish as they drive up to your door, that the answer will be "Mem sahib bhār gēa" (the lady is out), as most callers do, if only to save them the trouble of getting out of the carriage.

The Indian rules, too, about visiting are exactly opposite to the English ones. In England it is only your most intimate friends who invade your house at twelve noon, not ordinary acquaintances. At home it is the custom for the residents in the place to call on the new comers, and then only after some kind of introduction. Perfect strangers do not knock at your door and ask to be let in, because desirous of making your acquaintance! The fact that there are no doors to be knocked at in India is perhaps partly the origin of the custom of new arrivals "going the round of the station," as it is called, which is literally driving from house to house where there is a lady and sending your cards into her by the bearer, who brings back a "salaam" and you enter. Cards have always to precede you whenever you pay a visit, as the native servants make such "hashes" of European names, that the lady of the house would not otherwise know who her visitors were. The real origin of the custom may be that in former days—many, many years ago, of course—a new comer used actually to drive up to a house, the inmates of whom he only perhaps knew by name, and ask to be taken in. Every man's house, so far from being his castle, seems in those days to have been everybody else's, and at any one's disposal;—something like the baronial castles of old in England, where travellers and pilgrims were admitted, and food and shelter given them for the night.

The old Indian days that our fathers talk of with such pleasure were the halcyon days of Anglo-Indian life, never to come again. English ways and English formalities are daily gaining ground, although no one can ever become as rigid and ceremonious in that country, under the influence of the melting sun and open door life, as in foggy, depressing old England ; which yet with all her fogs and all her much-abused weather, is undoubtedly the best country in the world for English people.

Out of the old custom of literally walking into a stranger's house with bag and bedding has no doubt grown the rigid rule of new arrivals calling on the residents instead of waiting to be called on. It is a very trying ordeal to go through, and lately it has become very much the habit for the husband to go round alone and call on all the married people, as well as on the bachelors, and regimental messes. The draw-back to this is that it gives the husbands a double round, and many become mutinous on that score. For example, after the husband has called on all the ladies, they call on his wife with their husbands—if they can catch them—at the visiting hour. Then the new arrival has to return these visits, dragging her poor husband after her, he silently, if not loudly, vowing the whole time that this shall be his last visiting tour as long as he is in the place. The officers of a Queen's regiment here and there sometimes try to reverse this rule, and wait for the residents to call ;

but they have to wait in vain, and they end in knowing only half the people, and are called exclusive, and stuck-up.

Mrs. Lindsay and her daughter were of course called upon by all the ladies in the station, as the colonel knew them all, and had done his duty in visiting when he first arrived. Every day almost, as it struck twelve, visitors began pouring in, and the ladies had quite a *levée* every morning for a week, by which time nearly all in the place had paid their respects.

When Miss Lindsay became accustomed to the early hour at which she was obliged to sit in state and help her mother receive visitors, she found it rather amusing on the whole, but very bewildering, as neither she nor her mother could always tell who was who—a number of cards being occasionally brought in together, with the natural result of mistakes and explanations. One lady, whose husband was in the Bengal cavalry, was really quite indignant, and did not try to conceal it either, merely because Mrs. Lindsay took her for somebody else, whose husband was in the native infantry. The way she drew herself together, tossed her head, and turned up her nose, was amusing in the extreme, and, as Mrs. Lindsay remarked to her husband afterwards, "She looked as if Mrs. Dutton, for whom I took her, was as far removed from her as the low caste Hindoo is from the high caste Brahmin ; and

poor Mrs. Dutton, too, was so near, talking to Alice, I was afraid she would notice Mrs. Townley's manner, or the tone in which she spoke."

"Mrs. Dutton had not an idea of it, mother, I am quite sure ; she was talking to me the whole time about Lyme ; she knows the place well, and knows our old friends the Blacks and Deans, and had heard from Fanny Dean by the last mail. I liked her far better than Mrs. Townley—at least so far as I could judge by her appearance."

"I do not wonder, my dear," the mother replied, "that you should be little taken with the appearance of Mrs. Townley" (for it was no other than our friend of the 4th B.C). "There are tastes and tastes ; but neither you nor I care for conversation that is nearly always about horses."

"Townley is a great man for horses," said the general. "He turns an honest penny that way when he can. I believe he buys these Cabullee horses and breaks them in himself, and sells them for double what he gave for them. The natives here call him the 'saudagur sahib'" (merchant). After a pause, he added, "Tell me, Mary, how it happened that you mistook the two ladies? It was unfortunate, for the cavalry ladies—especially Mrs. Townley—would hate to be taken for a native infantry officer's wife, on whom some of the silly ones affect to look down."

"Very foolish and small-minded certainly, and what the difference is I cannot make out."

"There is no real difference in the class of officers, and they are all now in the staff corps. There is something more aristocratic in the cavalry service than in the infantry, that is all; and as the Bengal cavalry is very poorly paid, and more costly, it can only be for the love of the service that officers choose it."

Thus they went on discussing their tiffin and their visitors, when presently the colonel inquired,

"Has Gordon called yet?"

"No, I do not think so, but there were a number of men who called yesterday, and came in one after the other. I think there were six gentlemen at one time in the room; he might have been one of them."

"No, he was not," replied Alice, "Mr. Gordon is not a bit like any of the officers who called yesterday; he is so very tall, and they were all short—at least, in comparison with him."

"He is not a calling man or a lady's man; however, as he is in my regiment he is sure to pay his respects one day," observed the colonel.

"That young Mr. Brown who was here to-day I hear is in love with Miss O'Dowd," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"What, the fair girl who called with that very motherly-looking lady?" inquired Alice.

"Yes, the same."

"She will be a fortunate girl, I think," remarked the colonel; "for the man is a gentleman. And there

is something on foot in that quarter. Mrs. O'Dowd has an eye to her young ones, and she wants to marry her daughter to an officer and a gentleman."

"Mr. Brown is a gentlemanly man, but there does not seem to be much in him."

"No, but he is a good, straightforward young officer, and steady going as time itself I should say. There is some story about his saving Miss O'Dowd and Mrs. Vivian from a dark gharree accident; and he often met her in the hills afterwards and became intimate. The father gets on very well with all the youngsters—he is so cheery and good-natured."

"From what I have seen of the ladies as yet, I am sure I shall like Mrs. Munro and Mrs. Chaplin the best; Mrs. Munro is charming, she has such a sweet, gentle manner."

"Yes, Alice, Mrs. Munro is a thoroughly good, kind person, and a real and staunch friend; no superficial nonsense about her."

"What Hale's mother has to thank her for, is beyond description," said Colonel Lindsay. "Humanly speaking, that boy would not have been here now, if it had not been for her nursing; and she will do the same for any one who is ill."

"Mrs. Munro is a 'ministering angel' in very truth; and hers is not a solemn puritanical religion either, she sheds cheerfulness and brightness wherever she goes."

“ And her against sweet cheerfulness was placed,
Whose eyes like twinkling stars in evening cleare,
Were deckt with smyles, and all sad humours chased,
And darted forth delights, the which her goodly grac’d.”

“ Dear me ! it is half-past three,” exclaimed the colonel, starting up, “ and I promised to meet the general at four ; he wants to have a private look at my workshop, and the plans of working the other departments.”

“ Oh, papa, you said you would take me one day.”

“ Yes, and so I will ; but to-day will not do for you, as the general wants to poke about, and look into all the nooks and corners, and it would tire you ; so you had better go for a drive with your mother to-day.”

“ Yes ; I must go and see Mrs. Munro and ask how Mr. Hale is, poor young man ! I heard he had a terrible fall and was taken to the Munros’ house. After that we might go to the band, it plays on the malle to-night, and it is the day for the 58th.”

“ Very well, mother ; I am glad we have no party for to-day ; what a whirl we have been in since we arrived.”

“ Yes, we have not had much time to ourselves as yet, but the gaiety will soon be all over.”

“ I wish we could have our mornings to ourselves. I do not like these morning visitors ; one does not feel inclined to talk to strangers at that hour, and it seems such waste of time, too, for afterwards comes

tiffin, and then we have to go out, and the day is gone."

"Keep to that feeling, Alice, and you will not find time a dead weight as so many do in this country. Instead of regretting wasted time they generally wish to waste it faster."

The next morning being the Thursday on which Alice and her father had promised to meet Gordon on the race-course, they wended their way there about half-past eight and found a large gathering of people collected to watch the horses go round. There were so many to be tried, and their owners with their friends were all there. Nearly all the polo players and their ponies were present, as there was to be a special race for *bona fide* polo ponies.

Gordon's horse, "Plutarch," was ready to be taken round when the Lindsays rode up. Hale was not well enough to ride, so a soldier took him round. Colonel Lindsay told Gordon he thought he would have a good chance for "the race for Walers' for stakes only," but for the "Valley Cup race" his chance he thought very doubtful, as he would be too heavily weighted, the handicaps being according to height and breed, and the Walers were to carry the heaviest weights.

Miss Lindsay was immediately besieged by requests to enter her horse for the "Bracelet Race." She did not at all wish to race her mare "Finella," and did her best to get out of it, but had to give in

at last as she could not resist all the importunities of those who were arranging the meeting. They kept on saying that the race would fall through altogether if there were not sufficient entries for it ; and it was to be exclusively for ladies' horses—no bachelor was to be allowed to ask a lady to ride his horse, and then enter it as a lady's horse, as had been done before.

Her father told her on the way home, that he was glad she had agreed to let Finella try for the bracelet as he thought she had a fair chance ; and being only a half mile race, training for it could not possibly hurt her—"I think Finella will beat Mrs. Townley's horse, in any case ; did you see her galloping round ?"

"Yes, and wondered how she had the courage to do so all alone, there being so many lookers-on."

Alice knew very little about "half mile" and "mile races," it was all Greek to her. Really, in the course of the few days she had been in Peshawur, what a whirl of novelty she had already passed through ! "Everything so strange and new" she thought to herself ; "I wonder if I ever shall get accustomed to it all. The days even seem turned upside down. As soon as you are up you are in society, and before breakfast you meet the world and his wife ; then at an hour that you would think your own—at least free from ceremony—you have to be prepared for receiving visitors, the larger proportion being gentlemen in

gay uniforms. One seems to be all day long at the beck and call of others. I must say I wish I had a little more time to myself." These, and such like thoughts engaged her whilst they were riding home, until her father broke the silence by asking what was the subject of her meditation? He attributed her silence and abstraction to another reason, which will be seen by his next words, for he had only elicited from her a monosyllabic reply.

"He is a fine fellow, Gordon: there is not an officer in the regiment I like better; but he has the character of being a silent, reserved man, and ladies are not fond of him; although he is popular enough with his brother officers, and a splendid soldier to boot."

"Mr. Gordon has more to say for himself than any one I have met yet. They all seem to think one incapable of conversing on any subject but the weather and the journey out. I have hardly heard any of them make a sensible remark except Mr. Gordon."

"You have not had many opportunities of judging yet, Alice: you have only met him three or four times. However, he certainly has appeared to me to be more gracious to you than to most ladies, for he professes to despise the sex. I think he must have a history, I have often thought so from the bitter tones he uses sometimes."

"Does he, father? Poor man!"

"Dear me! talking of Gordon reminds me that he and the other madcaps asked me for ten days' leave to visit the district again where they got into such difficulties before. I must forward the application to the general to-day. It is very foolish of them to go there, they will be having their heads cut off next."

"What ever do you mean, father? I have heard nothing about it!"

"Oh, has not Gordon told you? Why he and Hale, Mr. Fuller and Mr. Peters, of the 20th N.I., were taken prisoners by some of the wild people; they rescued a bride elect from the murderous clutches of her father, and so came off with glory."

"Dear me, how interesting! do tell me more about it."

"No, you had better ask Mr. Gordon to tell you the whole story: he will do it better than I can; and we must hurry home now or your mother will think we have forgotten all about breakfast. Why, it is ten o'clock!"

So the days sped on, and February and inspections drew nigh; after that, the spring race meeting was to come off, and then again the season for going to the hills would soon come round: this was the programme to outward view, but much was to happen —to that little community, at least—before they separated for the summer.

Alice and Mrs. Townley had their ride at the ring,

and to Mrs. Townley's amazement Alice rode at the ring with the long spear in her hand as if she had often done it before, instead of only for the first time. There was so much natural ease and grace about Alice Lindsay's riding, for she was perfectly at home on horseback.

It was only natural that Mrs. Townley should not like to be outshone by another. Nevertheless in this particular instance she showed herself to be possessed of a certain generosity of mind. She was willing to admit that Miss Lindsay would beat her after a little practice, as her first effort had been so successful. Mrs. Townley rode well, but thought she rode better than she did, forgetting that good horsemanship does not consist in simply a quiet canter down a straight road on a quiet horse. If she attempted to go across country she would often discover that the ground was bad for her horse's legs.

Up to this time Mrs. Chaplin had been undoubtedly the best lady rider in Peshawur, though it now seemed possible that, with experience, Miss Lindsay might prove a friendly rival. But the latter was as yet little accustomed to ride untrained horses ; for in England horses are broken in properly before a lady mounts them, whereas in India she has to ride all sorts, and seldom troubles herself about the matter.

Mrs. Chaplin and Miss Lindsay became great friends, and were constantly together, and as Robert Hale was nearly always with them too, a few busy

bodies—or “idle bodies” rather—tried to make out he was falling in love with Miss Lindsay. Not a difficult thing to do by any means ; all who knew her did fall in love with her in some degree. Her extremely natural ways were perfectly bewitching, and both men and women admired her. She was a favourite with all.

“ Women will love her, that she is a woman
More worth than any man ; men, that she is
The rarest of all women.”

Hale was falling in love with her, but he had not discovered it. And there was danger in being so much in each other’s company ; a danger which all saw except those most nearly concerned, who are often the blindest to what concerns them most. The Lindsays never gave Hale a thought ; it was so natural to see him with the Chaplins and Munros, and when Alice Lindsay became one of their set—as one may say—the constant association of the two, did not astonish them, or raise any suspicion of a growing attachment on his part.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DOG FIGHT.

GORDON had asked the colonel for ten days' district leave for himself before the extra week's drills previous to the February inspection. As we have seen, the 39th was always ready for inspection, and was as near perfection as any body of human beings could be in their organised regimental form. Yet they were never fagged with over drilling, nor did they know what bullying was. Colonel Lindsay ought to have imparted his secret to some other commanding officers who, as the inspection time drew near, put themselves into such a fever of worry and flurry, that their unfortunate adjutants, poor fellows, did not know what it was to have a meal in peace. No sooner would the adjutant return from the colonel's bungalow, than half a dozen "chits" came flying in about the most trivial and childish things: such as "Jemader Kali Khan's coat does not fit properly—higher on one shoulder than the other;" or, "Mozuff

Deen's pugree is pulled down too much over one ear;" or, "I noticed a spot of rust on Mohamed Khan's saddle mountings." The commanding officer who can waste his time on such foolish nonsense—and yet nothing is too trivial for such to worry about—ought to be deprived of the command of his regiment and made to work under a commanding officer; for men of this kind are not fit for real service, they can play at soldiers, and are at home on parade. Such an officer is sure to lose his head on service, and think more of the regiment advancing for a charge in exact line, the horses' noses not an inch in front of each other; or, if it be infantry his men's thoughts must be taken up with the mode of shouldering their bayonets.

The general at Peshawur was a thorough born soldier, just the man to command an army on service. He must have seen through these fidgety commanding officers, and laughed in his sleeve at them. He would have done well to have given them some good advice on the subject, and officers and men would have been everlastingly grateful. A man who bullies his subordinates never improves his regiment, but only demoralises it. However, the 39th was an uncommonly fortunate corps in every way. The colonel and officers were all more or less popular, so the regiment contrasted more strongly with others than it would have done even had they not been so nearly perfect. Their perfection was almost their

fault, for the soldiers were, if possible, too well cared for.

Gordon obtained his leave as well as the others, but they all cried off except himself; he could not even persuade Hale to come with him, who said he had had enough of the Afghans the last time he was out, and he was not going to put himself into their clutches again. Gordon tried to quiz him, and told him that as they had got off with such flying colours when everything had been against them he ought to try again. Hale was impervious to persuasion; he said he would wait until they marched down country, when they would be out of the way of these murderous fellows. He had shuddered too often the night he was alone in the Afghan village to forget his feelings in a hurry, and especially when he saw their lethal-looking knives, and how easily and readily they handled them. It was all very well to fight them in open battle, but a stab in the dark was more than he cared for.

Hale was not far wrong in his judgment. He was no coward, but a plucky little man, and fond of sport; but he was wise not to invade the districts where the people were so addicted to murder and revenge. Although Mohamed Alli was friendly to them, yet the man whose daughter they had assisted in carrying off could not be so. The deed was naturally in his eyes one demanding the direst revenge, and he was not likely to lose any opportunity that might

offer. Colonel Lindsay remonstrated with all those who had asked for leave about going to this part again after the trouble they had got into before, and its consequence—the unfriendly feelings of all the followers of the vanquished chief towards them. The others listened, and Hale had given the project up of his own accord. Gordon was not the man to be remonstrated with ; if he had made up his mind to do anything, no one could turn him from it. In this instance, as he was going quite alone, he considered that he had only himself to consult, and was not afraid of the consequences. He told the colonel that he was not going to rush into the enemy's arms ; he was going to Shubkuddur, and would shoot in a different neighbourhood. The colonel suggested Attock ; but finding that the young man only turned a deaf ear, implored him not to go out of bounds, as the government would not rescue him if he got into trouble by so doing.

Charles Gordon did not know it ; but the father of the girl had sworn to be revenged for the part the Englishmen took in the abduction of his daughter. He had sworn the most solemn oaths that he would with his own hand, if possible, murder the big Englishman—meaning Gordon—for he had noticed him and had been much impressed by his height and military bearing. He had made his eldest son take the oath, so common to them, of perpetuating the revenge should his father not accomplish it in his

own lifetime. Moreover, to make that revenge more wicked and certain, they swore that if Charles Gordon himself escaped them during the space of five years, they were then to murder any Englishman they could lay hands upon, in order to wipe out the insult, which could only be washed away by blood. This oath had been taken in the most solemn way in the presence of as many of the heads of the families belonging to the tribe as could be assembled ; and moreover they swore in addition, that they were ever afterwards to consider all Englishmen as their foes, and to be prompt to join in every war against them. Gordon little knew the danger he incurred if he crossed their path alone. Yet had he known it at the time, I doubt if the knowledge would have deterred him from his second visit to the forts.

He started for Shubkuddur the last week in January, galloping over the evening before his leave began, and found his dinner all ready for him. It consisted of mutton and a curried fowl, brought over from Peshawur. Nothing could be got nearer in the shape of food, except the proverbial skin-and-bone "moorghee."

The next morning early, he was starting with his gun and pouch-bag, which, besides cartridges, contained biscuits and a brandy-flask, intending to have a long day's sport, when he saw two men going out of the fort a little way before him ; and on nearing them, he found they were his friends Fuller and

Peters. The meeting was one of mutual surprise, as Gordon had not an idea the two were coming out shooting. He was under the impression that they were hard at work preparing for the inspection, and so wondered to see them ; and in answer to his queries as to how their commanding officer had been induced to give them leave at this time, was told :

“ Well, you see, he had promised to give us leave again, and he did not like to break his promise.”

“ But we have to be back in two days’ time,” said Peters, “ when our troubles *will* begin. I would not so much mind our colonel’s everlasting worry if he would only stop it sometimes.”

“ Yes,” said Fuller, “ his nerves are strung to concert pitch before the inspection, and then he takes such a precious long time unstringing them again. He works us all up, and then keeps us to the mark until the hot weather fairly obliges him to relax.”

“ I would not mind his regimental worries half so much if he would only allow us to enjoy ourselves when we can. He has such a wonderful liking for keeping us away from every amusement.. If he does give one leave, he does it with such a bad grace and with so many restrictions, that it takes away half the good of it.”

“ I am thankful our colonel is not like that ; he is strict on duty, and his maxim is, ‘ No work, no play,’ but also adds, ‘ All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.’ ”

"I am sure I wish I could stick that on to our colonel's back. I have a good mind to, one day, when he is haggling at orderly room ; but I should get into boiling water, I suppose, that would boil to the end of my service."

"No ; we subalterns," said Peters, "must suffer without a murmur everything that a commanding officer imposes upon us, and look forward to the day when we shall be commanding officers ourselves. I hope we shall not be disliked as he is, eh, Fuller ?"

"No, indeed ; I wish I could like him and feel sure of him ; it is an awful bore to have to think for a week before one can make up one's mind to ask for a day's leave. Even of an afternoon he is always instituting something to worry us. On the days he knows we play polo, or cricket, as likely as not a chit will come as we are starting for either, to tell us to go to the lines and inquire into some rubbishing nonsense that would be far better done if left till next morning."

"Yes," said Peters ; "and he ought to know that the afternoon is the worst time to get anything out of a native—he is too sleepy and stupid after his dinner and his 'hookah' to say 'bo' to a goose."

"To be ordered on real service would do your commanding officer good, I should say. I do not expect many years will elapse before we are clashing swords with some of these mountain barbarians, and bombarding these hills."

"Things seem tending towards it even now," replied Fuller.

"Yes, the Ameer is not quite satisfied with our government ; something seems to have rubbed him the wrong way. Our siding with Yakoob Khan ruffled him a little ; such a proper sort of father he must be, calling his son that 'ill-starred wretch ;' still he professes friendship with us. An Afghan chief does not put much reliance on his own or other people's professions of friendship, I should say ; lying is so natural to them from their cradle that they can do nothing else all their lives. What a strange household that of an Afghan must be, to be sure. I wonder the children do not take to killing each other by way of amusement."

"What an escape we had, Gordon ; I do not relish trying another expedition of the sort."

"Yes, indeed," said Gordon. "Anything short of 'fair Rosamond' might have cost us our lives. But what have you been about since you came here ; have you done much shooting ?"

"You had better ask Fuller," laughed Peters ; "he enticed me out here for sport, and turned his attention immediately to other game, and left me in the lurch ; very mean, was it not ?"

"How can you say so, Peters ! why you and Colonel Carter have been getting on famously, and arguing to your heart's content about the wrongs of the service, and the years that must elapse before

they can be righted. I expect you have composed some articles for the *Times* in readiness for the next mail ; and feel sure, in consequence, that Parliament will immediately put everything else aside until the grievances of Indian officers are righted."

" You are an 'artful dodger,' Mr. Fuller, to turn it off in that way ; what could a fellow do but amuse himself as best he may whilst you are spooning Miss Carter ? It only requires two to play that game—a third hand would make a mull."

" You are incorrigible ! What would Colonel Carter say if he were to hear you ? "

" That is just what I was wondering myself. I mean, what does he say to you ? I fully expect, if you do not declare yourself soon, he will inquire into your intentions and your fortune."

" My answer would be easy—' my fortune nil, and my intentions honourable.' "

" Come, Peters, stop your chaff ; Fuller might do worse than marry Miss Carter. I am sure she would make a capital soldier's wife. I shall never forget her coolness and her pluck going down those rapids as she did ; and she seems to keep everything in the small rooms they have so tidy and neat."

" Thank you, Gordon ; I only wish I had enough to marry on, and I would propose to-morrow. It is a shame to try and engage oneself to a girl with only one's pay, and no prospect of promotion."

" Why no prospect ? you have a better chance

than any one of the adjutancy. Captain A—— will not stay long ; he is going to try for the cavalry, and you are next for it, unless the Chief puts in an outsider ; and he is not likely to do that, it is not his way."

At this Fuller became wonderfully excited, and said, "If I thought that, I would go back now and ask her. What makes you think so ?"

"I am sure of it, for I heard A—— say so the day before we came here. He said the colonel was too much for him, and he was using his interest to get into a cavalry corps, which he was sure would suit him better ; and that he had an uncle in command of one of them, so he was determined to go soon."

"What luck for me ! I wish I had known it yesterday."

"Why not go back now," said Gordon ; who, although not an advocate for matrimony, yet thought Miss Carter was the right girl for Fuller, and so encouraged the notion.

"Oh, no ! I am out shooting now."

Just as he spoke a flock of sand grouse got up ; all three fired. Gordon and Peters brought down two birds, but Fuller's shot went in another direction : the others noticed it, but said nothing, until when they had each had another turn at single birds and it came to Fuller's turn, and his shot was again very wide of the mark, Gordon chaffingly said :

"You will be shooting one of us if you go on like that. Your hand seems very unsteady to-day. The last was such an easy shot."

"I think I will go back, I am only hindering you. I cannot steady my gun somehow; and as you have Peters for a companion I shall not be deserting you," and he turned and went back.

"I'll bet they are engaged by the time we get back," said Peters; "they were carrying on yesterday under the father's nose, and he took no notice. I am sure the girl is in love with him."

"Then I hope he will marry her: she is not perhaps a catch, in the sense in which fine ladies are; but she is a real lady for all that, and loves him."

After Fuller left them they walked on much faster, and were at Michnee by "tiffin" time. It is only seven miles from Shubkuddur, but the sportsmen had made a long *détour*. They were both very hungry, and hoped to find Major McMullin at home, who could, of course, they said, "give them some grub of some sort." They had had nothing but dry biscuits since they started. When they reached the fort they found Major McMullin was out with his dogs, and his bearer told them the sentry at the gate would be able to tell them which way he had gone.

The sentry could only show them the direction the missing major had taken, so they set out in search of him. They had been walking away from the fort in the direction of the hills for about ten

minutes when they saw, a short distance in front of them, quite a concourse of people; and heard a great barking of dogs. At first—after their late experiences of the manners and customs of these people—they hesitated about going on; but on considering how near they were to the fort, they did not think there could be any danger. They little knew that what they were about to see—trivial as it appeared to them—was simply the first act in a great tragedy. “The world is a stage—all the men and women actors.” Indeed in that part of the world it is a stage, in truth; but the actors played with human lives—these were their toys. All they saw on this morning on reaching the crowd were two dogs fighting—a regular stand-up battle it seemed—and Major McMullin with his short thick stick, without which he never moved. He would have been wiser had he carried a gun. With this stick he was keeping off the pariah dogs, and was encouraging his own dog with words, which but for his master’s encouragement would have several times left off. The countenances of the lookers-on were not pleasant to see. There was anger and revenge depicted on more than one face, but against whom it was impossible for cursory and unenlightened observers like the newcomers to tell.

So very ordinary an occurrence as a dog-fight would not surely cause such looks. Dogs will fight, therefore why these spectators; and why all this

murmuring, boding no good to some one? One man in particular made himself remarkable by his excited looks and smothered oaths. He never took his eyes off the dogs, and was no doubt the owner of the dog which was fighting Major McMullin's.

Gordon and Peters watched from a little distance for some time, until they saw the fight was over and Major McMullin preparing to leave. His dog had apparently been victorious, as the other was bleeding and his had only a few scratches; the other was the smaller but more savage-looking of the two. They went to meet Major McMullin, who was very much surprised to see them.

On Gordon asking him "what all the crowd was about, and if they had been having a fighting match?" he laughingly said, "No, not exactly; that old brute Dalli Khan is always setting his dog at mine whenever he has an opportunity. He boasts so much of his wretched 'pariah,' and pretends it belongs to some wonderful and very rare species; in fact, he affirms its mother was presented to his family by the Ameer himself in return for some assistance he gave him when fighting against his son. I believe, *entre nous*, the assistance was some act of treachery. These people think nothing of betraying their dearest friends for a bribe."

"That man looks equal to any dark deed," observed Peters.

"What man? Do you know him?" asked the major.

"We noticed one man who looked very eager and very angry, and was apparently swearing to himself at the result of the fight."

"Oh, you noticed him, did you? He is a disagreeable-looking man, and I hope he is satisfied now, that his dog is not equal to mine. Ever since Loo came out here he has been jealous of him; for before his arrival his dog was supposed to be the king of all the dogs in these parts, as it were."

"I think I should have preferred his dog being victorious at the cost of my pride, and kept friends with a man of his sort," said Gordon.

"It may have been wiser. He and I used to be good friends; he is a Jemadar, and consequently is of some importance in his village, and so could procure me things which I had otherwise difficulty in getting. You have no idea of the inconveniences one has to put up with living in these outlandish places—they are innumerable; even those whose duty it is to provide me with eggs and fowls will never bring them unless they are obliged, and I have always to be applying to the heads of the villages for help."

"I do not envy you, I am sure. I would not live here for any money. The life of a London shoebblack would be almost more amusing, and his life is safe, and yours can never be so, whilst surrounded by these treacherous 'Affreedees,'" said Gordon.

"I do not agree with you there: my life is safe enough. I fear nothing at their hands, only it affects my comfort not to have to Dalli Khan for my friend. He not only saw that provisions were brought to me, but he used to get me skins from Cabul for much less than I could get them from the regular merchants, who are such thieves, and they not only try to make you pay double, but pass off old rotten skins for new ones if they can."

"As I said before, I would much rather have your late friend, 'Dalli Khan' as you call him—they are all 'Allis' or 'Khans' in this part—on my side than against me. If I were you, I would try and make up the quarrel with him as soon as possible. I should feel uncommonly uncomfortable with him for my enemy, living so near him as you do."

"Yes," said the major; "but these men are not so easy to turn round; they are not like the servile Hindoo, who will crouch down at your feet and kiss them in his show of attachment. These Afghan tribes are a proud race, and they care nothing for the opinion of the English; they are vindictive to a degree, and their creed is never to forgive an injury, so they would not say with Shakespeare—

" 'Kneel not to me :
The power that I have on you, is to spare you ;
The malice towards you, to forgive you : live,
And deal with others better.' "

"Surely there is nothing much to forgive in your

dog being better than his! all the more reason you should try and make peace with him."

"You would not talk so if you knew them well; for my own interest I wish we were friends, as I have no end of petty worries now with him for my enemy."

By this time they had all reached the Michnee fort, and Major McMullin insisted on the two coming in and having some tiffin; they would be certain of something to eat, if it were only some tinned provisions, as he had lately had a fresh supply from Calcutta, he said.

"Talking of 'tinned provisions,'" said Gordon, "reminds me of a capital story; but I daresay you have heard it."

"Do tell us what it is," said the major. "I never come across anything so lively as a good story in this end of the earth."

"A lady—I believe I know who it was, but I shall not say—set a great store on tinned provisions, and having passed all her days in India, thought nothing better could be had. In a most matter-of-fact way she remarked to a friend—and was overheard too by many others—that she supposed the Queen lived upon tinned provisions!"

"That is a good story. Poor Queen!" said the major. "I suppose the lady did not understand that the luxuries that come out from England hermetically

sealed are to be had in abundance in their native country."

"I heard of a lady," observed Peters, "who thought she would have to call upon everybody in London when she arrived there! Of course she could never have been in England in her life. I wonder if it was your friend of the tinned provisions."

"I pity her if she tried it," replied the major; "and how the Londoners would stare at her when she knocked at their doors; but your stories do not beat one I heard the other day, and the man who said it was out here shooting a short time ago. He only went home last year for a few months, and, never having seen the sea, said he supposed the steamers that went to England were 'dereao kināre luga hua' (fastened to the bank) at night."

"That is too good to be true," said Gordon. "I wonder if the man thought that the Bay of Bengal is a small river studded with sand-banks. Perhaps he thought that the colour of the Red Sea was actually red. How one could have 'greened' that man, and what fun it would have been, too."

A nice hot tiffin quite enough for dinner was served within half an hour of their arrival, and they finished up with "curry bhāt," which the "bowāchee"¹ had prepared on his own responsibility, having been told by the bearer that two "sahibs"² who "shikarkelta"³ had been to the fort and gone in search of the

¹ Cook.

² Gentlemen.

³ Were out shooting.

“major sahib.” The wise cook knew from former experiences that when unexpected “sahibs,” especially “shikari wallahs”—who are ever as hungry as hawks—came, he was always to prepare as good a tiffin as possible; and never considered it to be complete without the standing dish—“moorghee” curry.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOVE'S TOILS.

AFTER tiffin the friends returned to Shubkuddur as it was getting late and they did not care about being out on these roads after dark. There were two villages which they were obliged to pass which did not bear a very good name, and kept up a kind of guerrilla warfare with each other. Quarrelling and fighting among themselves seem to be the chief amusement of the Affrecedes. They were a great contrast both bodily and morally to the natives of Hindoostan, who are too indolent in the first place to be perpetually fighting, and besides are of a more forgiving nature. They will quarrel violently one day, and be the best of friends the next, and call each other dear brothers. With them every one of the same caste is a "bhaie" or brother. They also have a very convenient supply of fathers and mothers, too. If they have stayed away from their work, or want to get a day's leave—perhaps to go to some entertainment in reality—they will tell you they have been attending their mother's funeral, and perhaps

forget the next time when they want the same thing that they have already invented this excuse. How they must secretly talk over and laugh at the unsuspecting Englishman who is not up to their dodges ; and the tender-hearted "mem sahib" will probably say, "I am sorry you have lost your mother ; why did you not tell me she was ill and you could have gone to see her." They with their ready answers will probably say, "I was afraid to ask for fear you would be angry ;" always a very ready reason and excuse for anything they do. Lies fall from their tongues like quicksilver.

Before Gordon and Peters left Michnee they promised McMullin to go back either the next day or the following one, and go out shooting with him and his dogs. He asked them to bring Fuller with them, but they would not promise for him as he had found occupation at Shubkuddur, and did not care for sport just now !

When they reached the fort they found Fuller in his tent looking out eagerly for them. His face was beaming with pleasure, and they guessed the moment they saw him that their predictions were fulfilled. But there had been no wager on the subject, both feeling it was not one for a bet.

"I thought you were never coming home ; what a day's shooting you must have had. Colonel Carter wants us all to dine with him this evening—of course camp fashion. He dines at seven."

"We had better give him some of our spoil, only they will be rather fresh for to-night."

"You can give him some of the little birds for to-night, and I will take them to Miss Carter," said Fuller; "what a bag you have."

"And have you shot straight since you left us," asked Gordon, laughing, "we should both have been dead men by now had you remained with us."

"What a fellow you are, Gordon, to chaff, I have not been shooting at all."

"Oh! really, I am sorry for you."

Fuller had fully intended telling him of his success that day, but would not open his mouth on the subject to him after his chaff. However, he confided to Peters who shared his tent, that he had proposed and been accepted by Miss Carter, and also had gained the consent of the father.

"He objected at first," he said, "on the score of money, as, of course, it was his duty to do; but he consented when I told him that I had prospects in the regiment and expected soon to hear of my appointment to the adjutancy. He will not allow us to marry though, until I have actually been adjutant six months, as he says I must try and save a little money before we start housekeeping. Flora is braver even than I thought her, for she is willing to marry me on my present pay, and declares she could manage on it for both of us, as well as I do for one."

"She is a sanguine young lady apparently, but I

should fancy she is a good manager, judging by the way she contrives things here."

I wonder what these young men knew of good management; I do not think either was capable of writing an article on the subject, and explaining its true meaning. The one who was in love of course saw everything *couleur de rose*, and he must be excused for thinking his *fiancée* anything less than an angel, as this is the way without exception. There is a rosy hue over everything connected with love, and a joy that no man who has not tasted true love can know.

" Oh love, requited love, how fine thy thrills,
That shake the trembling frame with ecstasy ;
Ev'n every vein celestial pleasure fills,
And inexpressive bliss is in each sigh."

They had a very merry dinner that night; the friends all agreed that Miss Carter must be a perfect manager to have everything so well ordered and comfortable in a place so wild as to be enough to drive a housewife to despair. It had not had this effect upon her, as the dinner proved, for it was so well and quietly served, no fuss, none of the scolding of servants which is common in India. The colonel drank his daughter's and Mr. Fuller's healths together, so Gordon and Peters offered their congratulations; and at the first opportunity Gordon told Peters "that now it was all up with poor Fuller he pitied the poor wretch, for he was really in for a hanging."

Charles Gordon, don't affect to pity Fuller ; you do not know how soon you may be caught in love's toils ! His conscience did give him a twinge when he tried to feel scornful. He remembered a certain young lady at Peshawur who had been oftener in his thoughts of late than anybody or anything. To do him justice, I must say he unconsciously admitted the thought, he had now so long looked upon himself in the light of a fortress—impregnable—so far as the tender passion was concerned. It could not have been a well armed fortress after all ; there must have been an assailable corner on its ramparts or such thoughts could not have found entrance. As the broken and damaged wall in a fortress is always made doubly strong when repaired, and is the last to succumb to the enemy's shot ; so love built upon ruined love is often stronger than the original passion—or first love. With a man who has once been desperately in love, and has met with a grievous disappointment, the reaction will be great, but not insurmountable ; and though in all probability he will not easily fall in love again, should he do so, his love will be of a maturer and more lasting kind. Gordon was young, no doubt, to be an instance in point, yet he had loved very deeply, and he was a man who although young in years was old of his age, and suited to be the companion of older men.

The next day Gordon and Peters only loitered about, and employed a great part of it in refilling their

cartridges ; they had not brought a sufficient number with them, and it was a good day to devote to it, as it rained all the morning. Fuller, of course, spent his day with Miss Carter. They had arranged to go out on the raft in the afternoon if the rain stopped, and the boatman, Doon Alli, was delighted at the prospect of taking the "miss sahib" and the sahibs out again. Gordon and Peters thought they would be *de trop*, so refused all their invitations, telling them they could manage very well alone now. Love-making is such an every day occurrence, and always the same thing over and over again ; promises and plans made, only to be broken soon after the Gordian knot is tied fast. The two beings that before marriage seem perfect in each other's eyes, do not take long to find out that they are human, and full of faults. Those who are sensible make up their minds at once to remember that no one is perfect. They reflect that though the halo surrounding the loved one has hidden failings from view, yet they must be there. Therefore they are not astonished to discover some fault unnoticed before ; a discovery that will but make the wise resolve to love the more.

Gordon in his heart of hearts did envy Fuller a little. I do not mean for a moment to infer that he was in love with Miss Carter ; he only thought of him as a lucky man to be so appreciated, and wondered to himself whether any one would ever care for him so much. Then Alice Lindsay as he had last

seen her came into his mind. "How well she looked," he thought, "on horseback, so feminine and so gentle, yet full of life and spirit. She will never look at me though, I suppose, the colonel will want her to marry some civilian—a judge with a good hoard at home. But no, I must not malign him, I am sure he is not the man to sell his daughter for any money. Mrs. Lindsay, I should say, would be the more likely of the two to make a fuss about settlements. However, it is but natural they should wish their daughter to marry well."

Such was the tenor of Gordon's thoughts; they wandered back to his first love and he wondered if he would have been happy had he married her; no, perhaps not, they were no doubt saved some evil, it was perhaps all for the best. The fact that he entertained such thoughts, showed that he had recovered from the pain that used to come with the remembrance of how he had lost, and been deceived by, the girl he had so dearly loved. Gordon was not a religious man, and not one who would see or readily acknowledge the hand of God in everything, watching over each human life as if that soul was dear to Him and none other. So it ought to appear to us, did we really feel and watch for the Invisible Guardian, the loving, merciful Hand that tends and spares us from evil we know not of.

Gordon was suddenly roused from his reverie by Peters telling him he had finished all the cartridges he

intended filling, and was going out to try and find some wild duck, as this was a good hour for them, especially after rain, and that he hoped to make his way to the snipe "geal" too. Gordon offered to go with him, as it was dull work staying alone with nothing to fall back upon but his pipe; in truth he had had enough of his own thoughts.

They all dined again that evening with the hospitable Colonel Carter, and the next day was the last the two young men of the 20th N. I. could possibly stay; they were obliged to be at Peshawur late that evening, so as to be in time for parade the morning after.

The engaged pair came in, having had no end of adventures on the raft. They had not attempted the rapids. Fuller now thought Miss Carter's life too precious to risk in that mad way; but one of the inflated skins leaked and so they were nearly all upset one minute, and another running up against a rock; for the boatman's attention was entirely fixed on the misbehaving hide of the "ever cursed pig." Miss Carter had nearly slipped off the unsteady raft, and only just been saved by Fuller. They enjoyed these mishaps for they created a diversion; the expedition might otherwise have proved monotonous as the novelty had worn off. Fuller had shot some ducks, and being without a dog, had had to tramp through marshy ground to pick them up.

The next morning Gordon and Peters started for

the promised day's shooting with Major McMullin. It was a cloudy day and therefore could not have been better for the expedition, as these days are the pleasantest for shooting—a relief after the perpetual sun. Gordon intended returning to Shubkuddur the same evening, and Peters was to ride straight from Michnee to Peshawur, as he would not otherwise have time to return before dark. He did not like the idea of riding this dangerous road after dusk alone, as hardly any one had ever been known to pass along it at that time, either walking or riding, without his life being attempted. He had heard one of his own brother officers tell how when he was walking from Peshawur to Shubkuddur on duty, he had been shot at from behind a tree, the bullet startling him considerably as it whizzed by within a few inches of him. On looking in the direction whence it came, he could see no one, but he felt sure afterwards that had he then lost his presence of mind or turned to fly his life would have been lost. But instead of doing either, he instantly levelled his gun and aimed in the direction from which the shot came, waiting to fire, either if should another attempt be made on his own life, or so soon as he could see his enemy. He deliberately and slowly walked towards the tree with his revolver aimed at it; and just as he neared it, a figure darted away in the opposite direction. Of course he did not fire then; but had he been the one to fly instead of

the enemy, had their positions been reversed, his chance of safety would have been small. These men find out very easily whether you are a coward or not, and woe betide you if you are.

This story is one among many of the same sort, varying only in detail. Almost every officer who has been in the district has a story to tell of his own. All the colonels commanding at the forts had had a few escapes. Indeed they are obliged to be always on their guard, but this they get accustomed to, and think no more of it than we do of eating our dinner at the proper time. The wretches have even robbed the coolies sent by the officers to Peshawur for provisions, and then murdered them solely because they had previously robbed them—their lives having been thus taken for the value of a leg of mutton and a few stores. For such a trifle do these people commit murder. They deal with each others' lives as we should with a pack of cards; and as chance gives fortune or ill-luck to the players, so it is in their shuffling and dealing according to chance, that they play with human lives with as little thought as we give to a round game. How thankful all this should make us—free-born Britons—for our privileges; how grateful that our lot is not cast in such countries, our training not such as I am describing. When we feel inclined to be discontented with our own laws or government, or anything else belonging to us, let us only think of the many

barbarous nations in the world who live without either laws or justice, and with whom murder and robbery are so rife as to pass unpunished, almost unnoticed.

Gordon and Peters arrived at Michnee in time for breakfast, and the three started off together and went towards the hills away from all the forts, and quite in an opposite direction to the scene of their troubles. It was one of those glorious Punjab winter days, when the sun is clouded, and there is no glare. It was the perfection of a day for shooting for the previous rain had served to lay the dust. Nature was calm and hushed, no signs of a coming storm in heaven or earth; yet there was an imperceptible awe, a kind of foreboding of something, reflected perhaps from the unusual quiet of all surrounding nature.

“ There’s music in the sighing of a reed ;
There’s music in the gushing of a rill ;
There’s music in all things if men had ears ;
Their earth is but an echo of the spheres.”

Instead of music on this morning there seemed to our friends to be sorrow and sighing in all things around. They were themselves depressed. All the country seemed barren and deserted, not a human habitation to be seen anywhere; they only met a few stray men, and two or three children who stared at them open-mouthed, as though they were curiosities.

After they had been shooting three or four hours they all sat down to munch some biscuits and over-haul their spoil, and enjoy a quiet smoke and talk. They had been very silent the whole morning. They all agreed they would give anything for a “ peg ;” but as no one had encumbered himself with a bottle of soda water, they had to be content with what their flasks contained—probably brandy and water. Their conversation again turned on the dog fight which had been a subject of almost hourly discussion between them. Gordon could not shake off his first impression of the evil intention of the owner of the dog, Dalli Khan, and thought Major McMullin too indifferent on the subject. At last, after asking him if he were not afraid of going about now among them alone, and being only laughed at in reply, he rejoined, “ I am sure you will come to grief among these people some day, if you go on in this careless hap-hazard way. You ought to be careful not to offend them in the smallest matters. Remember the character they bear for vengeance for the merest trifles; and what you think a trifle, they think much of.”

“ Well, they cannot kill me because my dog fought that pariah brute of theirs and came off victorious.”

“ I should not think my life safe after it, I can tell you ; you forget the dog is valuable to them.”

Little did the three know how soon Gordon’s prophecy would come true, or anticipate the foul deed

that was to exact a fearful reparation truly for so small and unintentional an offence. Poor Major McMullin could only think of a dog fight as a passing amusement ; he could not view it in the same light as Gordon did.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FEARFUL TRAGEDY.

THE spot where the three men were sitting was in the middle of a large plain, with mounds or hillocks dotted about, covered with short grass and stunted bushes. Gordon had hardly finished speaking when Peters, looking up, saw, as he thought, figures crouching behind some bushes on one of these numerous hillocks. He felt sure he saw something move, and what he saw was of a dusky colour, much the same as the ground. He told the others, who looked up, but saw nothing, and Major McMullin laughed, and quizzed him, and told him "Gordon had infected him with his nervousness."

"You may laugh," he said, "but I am quite sure I saw a man's face and head leaning on his hand, the elbow on the ground. It was drawn back quickly as I looked up ; it was almost level with the

ground too, just to the left of that bush yonder. Now you watch."

They watched, but did so in vain, as they could see nothing. "Besides," said Major McMullin, "we only passed those bushes just now, and there was no one there then ; that was the way we came, if you remember."

"Yes, but these men might have been behind us without our knowing it. We hardly ever turned round ; we were looking straight ahead after our game the whole time. If we had looked round we should not have remarked anything wonderful in seeing one or two men walking behind us."

"Now I come to think of it," said Gordon, "I did see three or four men behind us at one time, just before we agreed to sit down ; and then, when we turned round and sat down where we are now, they had disappeared, and I never thought of them till this minute. If I had, I should have imagined that they had turned back, but it is strange they should hide behind bushes."

"You all make a great fuss about a man behind a bush," said Major McMullin. "I do not believe there is any one there. You have frightened yourselves into imagining some horrors, and now your eyes are deceiving you, and helping on imagination. To satisfy you we had better go and see." And he jumped up and ran towards the bush, leaving his gun behind him. Gordon called

out after him, "Take your gun, McMullin," but he either did not hear or did not heed; he went straight on towards the bushes behind which Peters had declared he had seen the moving figure. As Gordon and Peters were getting up to go after him—they had only just taken up their guns—they heard a shout, and what met their view? Four men had rushed at the poor major, and surrounded him; one had dealt him a fearful blow on his head, and felled him to the ground. It was all the work of an instant. Both Gordon and Peters rushed to the spot and fired, but in the scare and hurry it is not to be wondered at that both missed their aim. It was too late to save their friend; one brutal man had actually cut off his head before they reached the spot where he lay. They recognised the man in a moment—it was Dalli Khan, the owner of the dog. The expression on his face at the moment of the completion of the evil deed was more that of a fiend than of a human being—the triumph of vengeance, such as one might picture would be on the face of one of Satan's crew when a dark and evil deed had been done, and thereby a soul wrested by them, and a very triumph gained over the angels in heaven. The man's face was indeed a reflection of an imp of hell who had truly won his soul by the foul deed just perpetrated. Would he not have to answer for that other man's soul also whom he had hurried, perhaps in unrepented sin, to eternity?

“ Then God forgive the sin of all those souls,
That to their everlasting residence,
Before the dew of evening fall, shall flee.”

It was all so sudden that scarcely a minute had elapsed by the time the friends had reached the spot. They fired a second time before any notice was taken. Their victim was slain, and so the insult repaired; and to the other two Englishmen the murderers as yet bore no malice. But when the shots took effect, and two of their comrades fell, the other two turned on the Englishmen with their fearful weapons; and they saw their only chance was to fly for their lives. Peters was on the Michnee side of them, and he turned his face towards the fort, and flew there pursued by one man; but he was a quick runner, and gained on the man. The latter, however, did not give up the chase until they were in sight of Michnee, where he turned away, as he was afraid of going too near the fort where the Englishman would get immediate assistance, and he himself be taken prisoner.

Peters at once reported to the native officer in charge what had happened, and told him to take some men out at once, and try to rescue Gordon if possible. “ He would himself,” he said, “ gallop into Peshawur and report the murder of the poor major to the authorities there.” His escape had indeed been a narrow one, as he must have been caught and perhaps killed had he not been so fleet of foot. His pursuer was a more powerful man than himself. These

murderous ruffians carried a thick club-stick, a blow of which on the head was enough to kill any one, and they also had a long sharp knife in their "kummur bunds," which was able to complete the deadly work if needful.

Gordon also fled, but he mistook the direction altogether. It was very puzzling on the open plain, and he happened to be on the mountain side of the men, when he had to turn and run for his life, so he unwittingly ran into their country, instead of running away from it. The remaining man—who was the murderer—pursued him for some distance, but gave up the chase, as he could not keep up with him. The weapon with which he had cut off poor Major MacMullin's head was so cumbrous and heavy—a clumsy sort of hatchet—that it impeded his progress, and he did not dare throw it away, for without it he would have been entirely in the Englishman's power, and he knew, from what he had seen of him, that he was no mean antagonist. Gordon hardly dared look round; he felt he was being pursued, and a look might hinder him, so he went steadily on, not knowing whither he was going, and little thinking that every step was taking him farther and farther away from a place of safety.

This knowledge, as well as the weighty weapon, made the murderer give up the chase. He said to himself, "I shall be able to catch him later on, for he is making for my village, and he cannot well get back

without meeting me, if he does discover he is going wrong. His fate is sealed if he gets into the village of Bori, and he is making straight for it."

What the man said to himself was perfectly true; poor Gordon was flying into danger, and night was coming on, and when the darkness did set in what was he to do? After he had been running a good half-hour, he felt sure no one was pursuing him, as he could not hear a sound, so he looked round, and seeing no one he stopped to take breath, and consider what was to be done next. He now discovered his mistake, and did not dare turn back again so late in the day, and ignorant of the way. He made up his mind to go towards the hill, as he thought he saw something in that direction which looked as if it might be a village. There were lights dotted about, of course dim and uncertain in the dusk, but enough to betoken the presence of human habitations.

No one must imagine that the lights were at all like those of an English city, or even an English village. Gas has not penetrated to these regions, but who knows but that this convenient invention may a century hence—hardly sooner—reach even the outskirts of Afghanistan; or possibly its child, the electric light, may with the electricity worthy of its name, permeate and penetrate the dark regions of the earth before its solemn ancestor has even discovered they are dark. It will require a light materially and morally ten thousand times brighter than the

electric light of to-day to illuminate these lands, and bring them out of the darkness of their condition. The softening influence of the "Light of the World" is but too terribly required there to bring the people out of their woeful darkness.

"Hail, holy Light, offspring of Heav'n first-born,
Or of the eternal co-eternal beam,
May I express thee unblam'd? since God is light,
And never but in unapproached light,
Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee,
Bright effluence of bright essence uncreate."

Poor Gordon! he was in a sorry plight, tired and hungry, making for a strange village where he was more likely to meet with treachery than kindness. The village, so far he could judge, was still about three or four miles distant; he could not discern its size by the dim light shed by the wood fires and the small oil lights in the houses. They were only sufficient to show that there were human habitations and human beings. Even when he should reach the village, he had not as yet made up his mind at all as to what he would do. His was not a pleasant prospect. To have to pass a night, under any circumstances, in an Indian village, was not an enviable position. An English gentleman, who might be making a walking tour in England, and had lost his way, and was doomed to pass a night in a cottage, even if his bed were the stone floor, might consider himself in a palace as compared with Gordon under present circumstances.

The closed-in huts and hovels inside a village in Afghanistan are almost more wretched than an English pig-sty, and of the two, the latter is much to be preferred for many reasons. The village itself is like a labyrinth ; when you find yourself in one of its alleys —streets you cannot call them—it is very difficult to find the way out again. Turn to the right or left and you will only get deeper into the maze ; one of these narrow roads leads to another, and you turn and twist in and out in the most perplexing way. When a stranger once gets inside the village walls, he requires a guide to show him the way out again. The little huts are built close to each other on each side of these narrow passages ; they are crammed with human beings lying about the floor, smoking, eating, or drinking, as the case may be. The more wealthy of the inhabitants have larger houses built in the centre of the villages, and they have separate rooms for the women and children of the family. In India, the sons are married, as a matter of course, for it is a disgrace not to be. All live with their fathers, their wives with them ; thus the way the different families are all crowded together is wonderful, and most distracting, I should say, for themselves. But people can get accustomed to anything almost, and we—with our strong ideas of every man's house being his castle—do not understand any people tolerating such a packing of families. It is not uncommon for three generations of the same family

to live always together under one roof. Custom is their master from their birth ; they never think of reform.

“ Custom forms us all ;
Our thoughts, our morals, our most fixed belief,
Are consequences of our place of birth.”

I think our English labourer would object to having all his brothers and their wives living in the same cottage with him, even if the cottage were a large one. Now these poor villagers lived in tenements worse than any Irish cabin.

The stoutest heart might quail in Gordon’s plight ; he had a brave heart, and never gave in to any circumstances.

“ A heart unspotted is not easily daunted.”

The awful scene he had witnessed in the morning was enough to shock the nerves of the bravest man. To see a comrade killed in battle must be a terrible sight. But even more awful was this ; here had been no battle ; a few minutes before it happened, they had all been sitting talking to each other, as any of us might be doing, not dreaming that danger was so nigh.

This deed had nothing to do with boundary lines—except that its not having happened in our territory our government would have more difficulty in bringing the murderer to justice. This was truly an unprecedented act, a simple deed of dire vengeance for an unintentional offence. Gordon’s own words came

back to him, and the warning he had given poor Major McMullin was almost the last speech before the awful work was done. How strange it seemed now, and how true his foreboding of danger had been. The man's face had haunted him ever since he had seen it on the day of the dog-fight. He had hoped he would never see him again, he was not pleasant to look at; such a diabolical expression he had never before witnessed.

It would have been well for poor Gordon had he escaped with Peters; but he reached the village at last, very weary and footsore, and was refused admittance. Not understanding the language, he could not make out the reason. The reason was that the head man was out, and the others did not like to take the responsibility of sheltering an Englishman. He begged and entreated them to take him in, but no—they were stolidly impassive to all his entreaties. He little knew at the time how fortune favoured him in this respect, for had they taken him into the village he would have been a dead man ere the break of day. They were gracious enough to point out another village quite among the hills, where they told him he would probably be taken in. The man was very civilly inclined, otherwise he would have allowed him to lie in the ditch outside before taking the trouble to point out another village. The village first reached was "Bori," and in it the murderer had made sure of finding him.

Dalli Khan's disappointment was great when he found on his arrival that his victim had escaped, and so angry was he, he terrified the man who had refused to let him in by threatening the most horrible tortures. What added fuel to the flame was the fact that Gordon had gone to the village of "Kaura," which was not friendly to him. This village was right among the hills, on the north side of the Khyber, on the hill called Maidanāk, which is a spur of "Tartara." Here Gordon not only obtained admittance, but was very well treated by the villagers. They gave him an empty hut, and some milk and chupattees, made of the coarsest brown flour, for which he was very thankful, not having tasted food for very many hours. He was soon sound asleep; not having forgotten first to reload his gun and put it close to his side. He lay across the doorway—door there was none—only a piece of old matting hung up to keep out the wind and cold. Sound as he slept he fancied once he had heard the sound of muffled voices close to the door, and had felt something touch him, but he thought it might only have been a dream.

It was no fancy of Gordon's; the matting had been raised and a light turned on him by two men, and after their inspection two sentinels were placed at the door. So Gordon, when he awoke in the morning—at first wondering where he was—found himself virtually a prisoner in this hut, for the sentinels would

not let him pass out. A few months ago Gordon would not have stood this ; he would probably have knocked both men down and rushed away, gun in hand. But he had bought experience of these people ; and knew this was not the way to treat them ; that they were not easily cowed by an angry Englishman. He even reflected that the numbers were against him, and they had a perfect right to take him prisoner if they wished to, as he was trespassing in their country and consequently at their mercy. Gordon too had been very much awed by the scene of the morning ; and he trembled to think of what his own fate might yet be. This was the second time he had been in their power, and now he had really done something in their eyes to deserve punishment. He was humane enough to hope that the man he had shot was not dead, as he had no wish to take life unnecessarily ; besides the murderer was unhurt, and the other men were probably bound by oath to assist him in whatever he undertook.

Gordon was not left long in solitude, or even in suspense as to what was to become of him. A body of armed men, about a dozen, marched up to the door of the hut and handcuffed him after their fashion, which was simply tying a rope round his arms and binding it again round his body ; his gun was taken from him, and he was dragged, pushed, and hustled along between them. They vouchsafed to give him some chupattées and milk before they tied

his arms up. He did not understand a word they said to him, and he found talking to them useless. They carried him off to another village about five miles distant, right away, more among the Khyber hills. The village was buried in a sequestered valley, although up in the hills, the ascent being very rugged, and quite hidden from view of the road ; but it was on the spur of Tartara called "Rohtas," which is held by Momund levies, reported to have been raised by the Ameer to aid his regular troops in keeping the Khyber against the British.

Gordon did not know why he was taken there, and could only now feel thankful for every day that he was allowed to live ; and he hoped from the method of his removal that he was not going to be murdered, as this could have been done without all this trouble. They could not surely have intended to bring him to this village to be slain—as they would lead an ox to the slaughter-house. The thought was too appalling : and they could not have any reason for doing so, as the village of Kaura, which they had just left, was not on English territory, therefore they could commit the deed there as well as anywhere else. But they had a very strong reason of their own for not putting him to death. Gordon's fate hung on a thread ; he little knew the wheels within wheels that caused the preservation of his life.

Indeed a saving hand was guarding him from danger, watching over him, and turning the very

deeds that, to his short-sighted view, appeared to be the ones which caused his danger, into the means of his preservation. His fate had been decided on during the night in this way. The reason of his being kept a prisoner was because the murderer, Dalli Khan, was an enemy of the people of the village of Kaura where he had obtained shelter. Dalli Khan, on finding his victim was not at Bori, came on to Kaura at once, and demanded that the Englishman should be given up to him. His request being refused, and having no means at hand to enable him to enforce it, he was obliged to return unsatisfied, but vowing that they should be made to comply, and on the very next day. So the authorities at Kaura decided to send their captive or guest off under a strong guard and hide him in the village of "Popal," in the Khyber hills, where he was not likely to be discovered. Moreover this village was more like a small fortress ; it was well armed, and partly built on the sides of the hills, where there were natural caves, mounted with guns and garrisoned by armed men. They invented a very plausible story to tell Dalli Khan when he came the next morning, which they knew he would do. They told him that "when they were all asleep the Englishman had escaped, and gone back, of course, to Peshawur." He would not believe them at first ; but they took him to the hut where Gordon had slept, and again he heard the same story confirmed by the sentinels. They

added that the fugitive was such a monster, that he had knocked them both down too stunned to raise a cry; and as all the villagers were asleep, he had got out. Dalli Khan was convinced at last.

The village of Kaura where Gordon had slept belonged to the same people as the one whose chief had taken such solemn oaths of vengeance on him and his friends, on account of their assisting his daughter to escape. One of the men who had inspected him in the night had recognised him, and told the others how their chief, Fudjoo Khan, wished to catch him. They would certainly have then and there put him to death, and taken his head as a trophy to Fudjoo, and have been rewarded for thus having wiped out the insult; but as they hated Dalli Khan, the murderer, and he wished Gordon to be slain, they thought to keep him alive to spite him. If the chief heard of his being there, and ordered them to kill him, they might do so at some future time, but not now. He would be well punished, they thought, by being kept a prisoner in their village.

So Gordon's life was spared for the present, he little dreaming of the reason, and of how fortunate it was that he had not been admitted into the village of Bori, although at the time his disappointment had been great.

CHAPTER XV.

CONSTERNATION AT PESHAWUR.

A GREAT many of the ladies and gentlemen at Peshawur were driving on the malle on the evening of the day on which the events recorded in our last chapter took place, and were much startled to see Peters gallop madly past them all, without stopping to speak to any one. He looked so wild, was covered with mud, and had his gun at his side ; but the expression on his face was so strange that all the people he passed turned round to look at him.

Mrs. Chaplin and Miss Lindsay were driving slowly along, with Hale riding on one side of them and young Jones on the other. When Peters flew by—startling Hale's horse considerably—the latter exclaimed, “I am sure something must be wrong ; I hope Gordon has not got into another scrape.”

At Gordon's name Miss Lindsay started, and murmured to herself, “Oh ! I hope not.” Then she turned to Hale and said “Do go and find out what is the matter.”

"I do not know why Mr. Peters has passed his own bungalow. I wonder where he can be off to at that mad pace."

He had evidently just arrived, for he had all his shooting gear on, and was covered with dust, his horse too looking as though he had not drawn rein.

Hale turned round to do Miss Lindsay's bidding. He was himself very anxious to know; but the start she gave and her change of colour when he mentioned Gordon's name, raised a jealous feeling. "Why should she take such an interest in Gordon," he asked himself. Are you Robert Hale falling in love too? —beware before it is too late. Miss Lindsay will never be yours; you have no sympathies in common and would both be miserable!

Hale rode up the malle, and was stopped very often by different people all asking what had happened, for they felt sure something had gone wrong.

Peters went first to the brigade office, and finding it shut and the brigade-major not at home, went straight to the general, and caught him starting for a ride. He told him all the circumstances, not forgetting poor Gordon and the danger he must be in. The general immediately sent off a mounted orderly with a telegram to the Commander-in-Chief, and another orderly to find Captain V—, the brigade-major, and Major H—, the assistant adjutant-general to confer with him as to what immediate steps should be taken. The general told Peters he had done well in

coming so quickly with the news, and he had better go back to his bungalow and rest after all he had gone through. Peters could hardly realise all that had happened. He seemed dreaming, and to have had no power to think; as though a month had passed since the morning, so much had occurred in the interim.

Peters was quite an hour in reaching his bungalow, for he was stopped by everybody in turn asking him what had happened, and at one time was quite surrounded by a host of people all trying to get as near him as they could to hear his story. He did not like to gallop past them, for the poor horse had done its duty. The horse he was riding was one of Major McMullin's that he found at Michnee —his own pony not having arrived; but in any case he must have taken the major's horse, as his pony could not have galloped the distance at the pace the fiery little Arab did. The animal was a great pet of his master's, and he must have thought—horses do think and reason I am quite sure—that he had suddenly fallen into bad hands. He changed his mind, no doubt, when he reached his stable, as there he had every care and comfort. His legs were bandaged, and he was well rubbed down and groomed. Then he had a bran-mash given to him for his supper, and well he deserved and relished it. He was very thirsty, poor horse, but in his state cold water would have hurt him.

In one short hour the dreadful news was known from end to end. News of any sort travels fast, but when it is bad news how doubly quick it speeds!

Like all news that is handed from mouth to mouth, the story became altered and exaggerated, and Gordon's name was so mixed up with the poor major's that one person said Gordon had been murdered, and another, Major McMullin.

An officious young civilian rode up to the Lindsays' carriage and told Mrs. Chaplin that Mr. Gordon had been murdered. Miss Lindsay fell back in a swoon, when she heard this, without uttering a word. Mrs. Chaplin instantly told the coachman to drive home as quickly as possible. Hale met them and tried to stop them; but the coachman would not stop, and Mrs. Chaplin shook her head and pointed to Miss Lindsay. Hale did not take in what was the matter; he did not know of the report of Gordon's death, or he would have guessed. As it was it did not dawn upon him that Miss Lindsay had heard an untrue version of the terrible tragedy.

Tragedy it was, too truly, and the excitement it caused in Peshawur was very great. Every one talked excitably to every one else; some wanting to make an expedition at once with troops, and demand instant reparation for the murder, and the immediate restoration of Gordon should he be a prisoner in their hands. These foolish ones did not

consider for a minute the consequences of such a rash and unconsidered move as they were proposing.

Some men are very short-sighted, and Englishmen in India are proverbially so. They live in a conquered country, and so they fancy very often—without rhyme or reason—that all the adjoining countries ought to be subject to them too, and obey and bow down to them, in the same abject fashion. They do not weigh in the scale the severe penalty they would have to pay should such a course as they advised, be taken. To begin with, an enemy would be made where we had now a friend and ally. Even a barbarous chief—which the Ameer Shere Ali is not—would not be able to overlook an affront so great as it would be, if we were to enter his dominions with armed men before asking him to do justice to all parties, punish the offenders, and release the Englishman. No doubt it would have been an amusing sport to these people to take the law into their own hands in the way they were proposing ; but they would not have found the amusement to last long. And they would certainly have ensured Gordon's death by such a proceeding.

The general fortunately had a cool and clear head, and had no wish to endanger the lives of hundreds to rescue that of a single individual, who had partly brought the trouble upon himself, for he had broken the boundary rule. We may pity him in any case, for he, unfortunate man, was destined to pay a severe

penalty for his rashness this time, and to be thankful should he escape with his life.

Time went on, and nothing was heard of Gordon. He could not be found ; men had been sent out to make inquiries, in the different villages in the country round about the forts, but always returned without any news of him.

A letter was sent to the Ameer of Cabul requesting him to give up the murderer, and order the Englishman to be released ; but the poor man could not enforce either mandate, much as he might wish to do so. He did order an investigation of the matter to be made, and said the Englishman was to be released, and the murderer handed over to the English government. He was not obeyed ; his subjects were very lawless, and a large portion rebellious—these people too, sided with his son Yakoob Khan—so they would not obey him, and he had no means of enforcing submission and obedience to his laws. For whilst most of these lawless mountain tribes are subjects of the Ameer of Cabul—some are independent and owe no allegiance to him ; and others, who are his subjects in name, never think of obeying him, if obedience be contrary to their own will. The latter is their acknowledged lord and master.

Days were growing into weeks, and weeks into months, and the people at Peshawur were beginning to give up all hope of ever hearing of poor Gordon again. “Poor Gordon” they always called him now.

Neither Colonel Lindsay nor any other officers of his regiment believed him dead. The English, as a race, I think, always cling to the smallest hope ; unless they hear a missing man is dead, they like to believe he is alive. They were always talking of Gordon at mess, and recounting the daring deeds he had done ; there were some there who had known him from a boy, and always told how he got out of every scrape in some way, when perhaps another man would have gone to the wall. They always when talking about Gordon came to one conclusion, that he would fall on his legs somewhere, sooner or later, and in some guise or other would reappear, and be one of them again. Let us, also, hope that he will ; but the appearances at present we must own are very much against such an event.

Mr. Fuller, when he heard the news, felt very grateful to Flora Carter for being the means of preventing his being of the party. The Lindsays had a dinner party the evening of the day Mr. Peters rode so hurriedly into the station. Miss Lindsay did not want to appear at dinner, not feeling well ; but her mother insisted on her doing so, and told her she was very silly to give way to her feelings as she had done on the malle.

“ You, an officer’s daughter,” said she, perhaps not improperly indignant, “ because you hear a gentleman has been killed, to go off into a faint like a school girl ! I thought, my love, you prided

yourself on being above such things, and on being your father's daughter. What your father will say when he hears I do not know."

So the indignant mother went on : she was so very proud herself of being an officer's wife, and especially of being the wife of such an officer as Colonel Lindsay. And well she might be, for he was a husband to be proud of ; he was always kind and considerate and honourable in all his dealings.

Miss Lindsay, after her mother's scolding, did reason with herself about giving way to her feelings : it was a bitter struggle, but no one knew it but herself. The guests at her father's that evening—when they looked at her calm, beautiful face, every now and then brightening into animation when any subject of the conversation particularly interested her—little knew the bitter load at her heart, and how difficult even the semblance of gaiety was. The party was not a gay one, as few could talk of anything but the one absorbing topic of the day, although the host and hostess did their best to turn the current of the conversation. Yet it was but natural that after so dark and terrible a deed as the event of the hour, a gloom should hang over the place and affect the thoughts of all in it.

During dinner Miss Lindsay did not exert herself to talk, because she was between two friends—Major Munro and Mr. Hale—both of whom she knew too well to care to appear to them different to what

she really felt. Hale could see how much she suffered, by her subdued manner and the sad look which came into her eyes when he talked to her. Major Munro left her alone out of sheer kindness, knowing she would be obliged to exert herself after dinner.

Mrs. Chaplin had told him of the scene on the malle, and of the unfortunate mistake the young man made about poor Major McMullin—taking one man for the other. The Chaplins knew Alice Lindsay far too well, and had seen too much of her lately, to be deceived. They were thoroughly aware it had not been simply the shock of the news of the dreadful deed which had caused her to lose control over herself; but because she had thought it was Gordon who had been killed.

Captain Chaplin and his wife often talked it over, and he used to say “he hoped they would marry, as he thought they were suited to each other. Gordon had so many fine qualities; he was so thoroughly a bold, honest, honourable man, and if he married happily would give up his wild ways, and settle down into a good husband, and make all the better one no doubt for his former *penchant* for scrapes.”

Mrs. Chaplin did not quite agree with her husband in this matter: she did not much like Gordon, and no wonder; for he had never given her a chance of liking him, as in his habitual indifference to ladies, Mrs. Chaplin had not been an exception.

Alice Lindsay was the one exception ; he had sought her out himself, and on every possible occasion had been in her society. Mrs. Chaplin, too, felt sure Hale was in love with Alice, and would much rather have furthered his suit than Gordon's—if she had helped any. Mr. Hale was Mrs. Chaplin's favourite, and she did not think Alice Lindsay would be thrown away upon him, as her husband did. But he was right, they would not have been matched had they been mated.

Men are generally far the truest judges of other men. Women judge men according to their own standard, and so they are invariably deceived. They have too much faith, they believe easily, and not being logical, cannot reason as men do. If in doubt about a man's true character, it would be far wiser to ask another man's opinion than trust to that of even a bosom friend. For women are so easily biased, and so blind to their own interests, even whilst they vainly and fondly imagine that they are the best judges.

However, there was not much use in speculating on a marriage between two people, one of whom was probably in the hands of the "Affreedees," and entirely at their mercy, even if he were alive.

CHAPTER XVI.

MORE HORRORS.

MORE than a month had now elapsed since Gordon's disappearance, and all his friends were feeling very anxious about his safety. Those who knew Alice Lindsay slightly would not have remarked any change in her ; but to her dearest friends she was changed. She had lost much of the elasticity of her brightness, and these saw how sad and silent she was at times when she was alone and at her ease, and not under the restraints of society—then she was obliged to pretend to be lively.

“ Unhappy Psyche ! soon the latent wound,
The fading roses of her cheek confess,
Her eyes, bright beams, in swimming sorrows drowned,
Sparkle no more with life and happiness,
Her parent's fond heart to bless ;
She shuns adoring, and seeks to hide,
The pining sorrows which her soul oppress,
Till to her mother's tears no more denied,
The secret grief she owns for which she lingering sighed.”

She never talked of him, he was far too dear to talk about. What poor Alice went through at this time in her attempts to command herself—nay, even to feign a gaiety she did not possess—she alone knew.

The saying “It never rains but it pours” is old and common-place, but it is nevertheless uncommonly true, and it was proving its truth at Peshawur now. Hardly had the inhabitants recovered from the shock of poor Major McMullin’s murder, when the news of another awful tragedy, and one which convulsed the whole country, came to horrify and distress them, and make them almost wonder if they were living in a peaceful country and in a peaceful time. This was the news of the murder of the Governor-General in the Andaman Islands; and although it may seem outside my story to allude to it here, as it happened so many hundred miles away, yet the circumstances connected with it have to do with the “Year in Peshawur,” for the murderer of Lord Mayo in the Andaman Islands was an orderly at Peshawur in the service of the government; in fact, he was the Commissioner’s orderly; his home was in a village in the territory of Mohamed Alli, but he had taken service with our government.

Be that as it may, his family had a blood feud with another family of the same tribe, and he, when at home on a month’s leave, murdered a man belonging to the other family. He was brought to Peshawur, tried by the civil court, and sentenced

to be hanged. The Governor-General—in his just and humane dealings with all the people whom he governed—taking into consideration the manners, customs and habits of these tribes, commuted the sentence to transportation for life. He considered that the murderer was only obeying his own creed, and the laws he had imbibed from infancy. Instead of the man accepting the gift of his life, he was angry, and considered that he was insulted by the alteration of the sentence. Very strange, for one would naturally expect him to be thankful to Lord Mayo. Instead of feeling grateful to him he swore that he would be revenged for the alteration of the sentence by murdering an Englishman ; he would only be too thankful to murder the Governor-General himself, but that he could never expect to do, as he was not likely to visit the Andaman Islands. The sad sequel we all know.

When this terrible news reached Peshawur no one could think or talk of anything else ; and Major McMullin's murder and poor Gordon's disappearance were well-nigh forgotton, for the time being. But there was one there who never forgot poor Gordon for a moment ; he was ever in her thoughts. Poor Alice Lindsay felt desperate at times ; she longed to go in search of him herself ; she felt so sure that she would find him if she did. Why did they not hunt for him properly and make them give him up if he were a prisoner ? These thoughts came so

naturally to her—she had given her love without realising it. She never asked herself the question whether he loved her in return, and what ground she had for supposing he did. Her love was unreasoning and spontaneous, not to be reduced to fractions or sordid calculations of any sort.

Now Alice Lindsay was not the only one at this time who was suffering and being torn by the agonies of love. •

“ Love is not to be reason’d down, or lost
In high ambition or a thirst of greatness ;
It’s second life, it grows into the soul,
Warms ev’ry vein, and beats in ev’ry pulse ;
I feel it here : my resolution melts.”

Poor Mr. Hale was suffering for the love of her ; and his was unrequited love—that bitterest of all. Alice was quite unconscious of it, and never viewed him in the light of a lover. She was so in the habit of seeing him every day, and took all the little attentions he paid her as a matter of course without attaching any meaning to them. He would have declared himself to her long before, only he could not get her to see that he cared for her ; and he did most truly, poor fellow ! It was partly because he did not like to leave Peshawur whilst she was in it that he did not accompany Gordon on his shooting expedition. He now felt that Alice cared for Gordon, his greatest friend in the regiment, the more trying to him, because he looked upon him in the light of an elder

brother. He made up his mind on seeing how things stood with Alice, that he would not stand in Gordon's way, or try to win her affections, until it was proved beyond all doubt, that Gordon could never return. With his notion of honour he felt that it was not fair to steal, as it were, a march on his friend. He could not help thinking it very strange and unfortunate that he and Gordon should both care for the same girl. Gordon had never been a ladies' man, so it was very odd that he, of all others, should be the one to stand in his way.

This was no doubt all the more reason for his carrying all before him when he did try and storm a fortress. He had not laid siege to Miss Lindsay by any visible process; but she had exercised some charm over him that made him unconsciously seek her whenever he could do so. This alone was enough in the eyes of those who knew him well, to express more than the most marked attentions of ordinary men.

A week after the news of the poor Governor-General's murder reached Peshawur, an event occurred there which created a great sensation. This time it was in the civil lines; but before narrating it I must first say something about the chowkedars, or night watchmen, as I do not think they have as yet figured in this story.

In every station in India, it is necessary, to ensure your house not being invaded by robbers, to keep a man to guard it at night. He puts his bed in

the verandah and sleeps in it until all in the house are in bed, and then begins his watch. It is his business to perambulate the house ; and every now and then he will give a fearful howl, or yell, or whatever you like to call it. It startles the sleepers inside if they are not accustomed to it. The object of the shouting of the chowkedar is, I suppose, to let intending thieves know that he is awake, or to communicate the fact to his brother chowkedars in the other bungalows. This custom of keeping chowkedars is absolutely black mail ; for it is paying a thief to keep off a thief, for all the chowkedars are thieves by trade, and belong to the thief families ; indeed there are villages entirely populated by these professed thieves. You may say they are a caste of themselves. It is very dangerous to turn off a chowkedar. If you do, the chances are your house is robbed without loss of time. In most Indian stations they are kept, but in some there is not so much need of them as in others. In Peshawur they were indispensable, and were obliged to have arms ; in fact so dangerous was the neighbourhood, that in most of the large houses two were kept.

One night a civilian, a Mr. Ford, had been dining at one of the messes in cantonment, and had walked back to his bungalow. He did not enter the compound by the gate, but climbed over the low wall, as it would be a short cut. One of his chowkedars saw him and fired at him. This naturally made him so

angry that he rushed at the man and knocked him down, his head receiving a fearful blow as he fell from the corner of the base of one of the verandah pillars, being cut open just above the temple. Before Mr. Ford had time to do anything for the fallen man, he was attacked by the other chowkedar, and a struggle ensued which would have ended probably fatally to the poor master had not the servants been roused by the noise, and called a gentleman who lived next door to help him. The latter only arrived on the scene just in time to save Mr. Ford, who had received some very severe blows. The chowkedar ran away when overpowered by numbers, vowing vengeance and declaring that if the man died whom Mr. Ford had thrown down, the family would be revenged upon him, and neither he, his wife, or his children should escape them.

It was a most unfortunate occurrence; for the chowkedar no doubt had fired, as he thought, in the exercise of his duty, having taken his master for a thief. That he should not have recognised him in the darkness was not extraordinary, as he had come just as a thief might, over the wall. The chowkedar died the next day. Poor Mr. Ford was confined to his bed for some time, and it was a very sad and unfortunate occurrence for him, as he could not after this ever feel safe at Peshawur; and having only lately come there with his wife and children it would be a serious matter for him to be obliged to leave the place.

It was now about six weeks since Gordon had been lost, and was the end of March ; the spring had again come round. Peshawur was looking very pretty ; the trees were covered with blossoms of many colours and hues, and the gardens were putting on their best attire. A new-comer would have thought it then the prettiest station in India ; for it does look lovely when all the trees and flowers are in full bloom—for gardens abound in it—and with the picturesque hills in the distance it is truly beautiful. But the outside fairness hides the deathly sickness within, as the sound shell hides the rotten kernel.

The Chaplins and Munros were dining with the Lindsays one evening *en famille*, which they often did. After discussing the weather, the houses in the Hills that were available for the coming season, the months they hoped to take for their holiday, and many other topics common to social life in India (and absorbingly interesting to the inhabitants of an Indian station, where the leave is the one great event of the year—the fixed planet ; all the other excitements being as the lesser stars revolving round it) the colonel suddenly said—

“ I suppose you have all heard that Mr. Gorman has lost his horse again ; and all through his own stupidity ? ”

“ No ; I did not even know he had recovered it,” replied Major Munro ; “ if he has, it is the first horse I have ever heard of being brought back after

having been once stolen by those Affreedee horse stealers."

"He offered such a very high reward, you see, and so they thought it worth while, I suppose, as no one in their country would give them five hundred rupees for a horse, although Gorman's horse was fully worth a thousand to him."

"Do you mean to say he offered five hundred for that Arab of his?" said Chaplin; "I should not have considered him worth more."

"Yes, and now he has lost the five hundred and the horse into the bargain."

"What ever do you mean? How could he have lost the horse again and the reward too?"

"That is the absurd part of it, and I cannot help being amused when I think about it; but it is anything but a joke to poor Mr. Gorman, who is never likely to see his horse again. But I must tell you how it happened. This morning one of these Affreedee fellows came to Mr. Gorman's bungalow riding his horse, and said he would immediately hand it over to him on receipt of the five hundred rupees, but not before this sum was paid. Mr. Gorman paid the man, and as he was going away said to him, 'I wish you would show me how you managed to steal my horse?' He never could make out how the thief had managed to extract the animal from the stable, as he said he was very securely fastened, and the syce asleep in the place. Mr. Gorman had

his horse taken to the stable and fastened up, and the man went through the whole performance, finishing it as he had done before, by mounting the horse, when he rode away on it like a flash of lightning, before any one had time to move. This is the story as it was told to me by D——, who was with Mr. Gorman at the time."

"I should hardly have believed such a story had you not told it to us as a fact. It is a good one. Poor Mr. Gorman; I am sorry for him."

"I wonder we did not hear it before," said Major Munro."

"It only happened this morning," replied the colonel, "and I met D—— as I rode down to the civil lines. News from there takes a little time to travel up to cantonments."

They could talk of nothing but this wonderful story for a long time; but the colonel changed the conversation by asking Major Munro whether he had heard of the Commander-in-Chief's intended visit to Peshawur, and when he answered "No," went on to say that he had heard on very good authority that morning, that his lordship was coming to Peshawur to inspect the troops.

"How very odd!" said Major Munro. "I understood he was not coming higher than Umballa, and was going to inspect all the way up the line *en route* to Simla; but there is no dependence to be placed on the projected movements of any one in authority out here."

"I am quite sure he is coming, as I received a semi-official letter in reference to it, as there are arrangements to be made by me, and some orders were given for work to be done in our workshops. The letter not being 'official' cannot appear in orders, but I fancy it will be in the brigade orders, and circulated in the order books in a day or two."

"I wish the Chief would keep away, I must say," said Chaplin.

He spoke feelingly, being adjutant; but we have already seen that his position as adjutant was a very enviable one.

"I do not understand why he should come straight up here, with only an inspection or so in prospect; it is most unusual, and contrary to all precedent. There must be some other reason, and a very good one too, I should think," remarked Munro.

"There is a reason," said the colonel, "but it was told to me in confidence, and so I cannot make it public; and if I tell you it must be under a promise of secrecy. But it will only be a secret for a day or two I fancy, as it must be known soon. One of Lord D——'s staff, who is a friend of mine, wrote and told me privately that a ride into the Khyber Pass was meditated, and although not given out publicly as yet, it would soon be, and I had better not say anything about it until it was known."

At the sound of the word "Khyber" Alice looked up, and not a word of what her father had just said

escaped her. It made her so long to go too. She kept on thinking to herself—oh, if she could but once get into the “Khyber,” she felt sure she should be able to find Mr. Gordon. She did not know what the “Khyber” was like, or anything about it; but she longed to see it, and be in it, as *he* was somewhere there, and she had an indefinable feeling that she should feel happier if she had once been there.

She felt happier, poor girl, already. It was some comfort to think that somebody was going there; she felt that nothing had been done to search for and save the missing officer.

When the Munros and Chaplins left that evening they both remarked how much brighter Alice had become; she was much more herself than they had seen her for ages. But the change had only taken place after the conversation about the Khyber Pass.

After the guests had left Alice went up to her father, and began of her own accord asking him about the Khyber Pass, and why the Commander-in-Chief was going to visit it.

“That is more than I can tell you, my child,” he said, “but what makes you so interested in it, dear?”

“I should so very much like to ride there too; shall you go?”

“Yes, I hope to go, and I fancy every one will try and go who possibly can.”

“Will you take me with you? Now, you *must*

promise to, there's a dear good father," said poor Alice, persuasively. "I would give anything to go."

He could not help looking at her in astonishment; for he had never seen her so eager or animated before, and lately he had remarked how strangely quiet and silent she had been.

Mrs. Lindsay was more than astonished at Alice's request and her great desire to go into the wild country.

"Really, Alice, what will you want to do next?—Go to the moon in a balloon I should think; and it would be as safe and wise an expedition for you as the one you wish to undertake. I am sure too many poor people have been murdered in that dreadful Pass without your being added to the number. You cannot carry a gun, my child, and I am sure no one will go there without one to run the risk of being shot at by people hiding in caves. I have heard all about them."

The colonel was as much amused at his wife's anxiety as he was astonished at his daughter's request.

"Why, Mary, you do not suppose," he said, "we are going to fight our way in. We shall go as visitors. The Commander-in-Chief would never go to a place like that if there were any danger attached to it. It would not do, if only for political reasons. He will be properly escorted, too, you may be sure." Then turning to Alice, he added, "I will not

forget you, dear, and if it is possible you shall go with us, only you had better try and get another lady to accompany you, if you are allowed to go. Perhaps Mrs. Chaplin would like the ride."

Poor Alice went to bed happier that night than she had done for many a day ; and we may be sure she had pleasant dreams.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MEMORABLE RIDE.

ABOUT ten days after the evening when the Khyber expedition was first mentioned by Colonel Lindsay, Alice was putting on her riding habit at four o'clock in the morning, and it was a very cold morning, too. Where could she have been going at that early hour? She was so brisk and lively too—more like the Alice of old days!

Well! she was really going that morning into the Khyber Pass. She could hardly believe it, it must be too good to be true; she could not help pausing, and every now and then thinking and wondering if she were dreaming, or really awake. The ayah certainly thought her mistress was dreaming, and wondered when the "miss sahib" would be ready, and she could go off to her bed again.

Alice was roused by her father calling to her to be quick, or they would miss the party whom they had engaged to meet at a spot two miles out, at

Hurra Singh Ka Burg. On this, she hurried, and soon released the sleepy ayah ; she swallowed her tea and buttered toast, and then mounted Finella who was very frisky, not understanding I suppose why she was being taken out of her warm stable into the cold air. She was not accustomed to go out before seven ; of that the wise horse was quite sure. She warmed herself by frisking and kicking, and doing her best to go off into a gallop. They went at a pretty good pace to Hurra Singh Ka Burg, the place where they were to meet the Chief's party. They found a great many gentlemen already assembled there, but no sign of Lord D—— ; but after waiting about ten minutes the general's carriage drove up with him in it.

By the time Lord D—— and his staff had mounted their horses, the party had all arrived, and a large number they were too—about seventy or eighty gentlemen, military men and civilians together. The Commissioner and Assistant-Commissioner, the general and all his staff, half a squadron of one of the Bengal cavalry regiments, and nearly all the officers from every regiment.

Miss Lindsay was the only lady of the party. Mrs. Chaplin had sent a message the last thing the night before to say she really could not manage the ride. Alice and her father rode in the front row ; she was between him and the Commander-in-Chief, who was a very gallant old gentleman,

and did honour to her pluck in coming with them. He seemed very pleased to have a lady in the expedition.

Expedition it was, but whether there were any political reasons in the background—which I doubt—never transpired. When the order was given to gallop, the road was very hard and stony, and there was such a clattering behind with all the horses, that it was too much for Finella's nerves, not having been accustomed to a tramping of horses at her back. She therefore thought she had better put some distance between them and herself, and ran away ; it took Alice by surprise, as her little mare had never done anything so audacious before ; she had often been very frisky, but had never even attempted to bolt. Alice's fingers too were cold, and so numb that she could hardly feel the reins at all, and Finella took advantage of this ; but it was underhand behaviour, to say the least of it, and a mean advantage to take of her rider. The Chief, seeing Miss Lindsay could not pull up her horse, gave the order to halt. They halted for a minute, which had the desired effect on Finella, who, when she found the clattering had ceased, also condescended to allow herself to be pulled up. It had been enough to frighten her certainly.

After this they galloped and walked alternately, and nothing happened until they reached Jamrood, the fortress about three miles from the entrance of

the Khyber Pass. Here they found a body of armed men—soldiers belonging to the Ameer of Cabul's army. The Ameer had sent them to escort Lord D— and the party with him into the Pass, to ensure their safety. His mandate alone would not have sufficed for the purpose. The wild inhabitants of the Khyber hills were not sufficiently under their sovereign's control, to ensure any of his orders being obeyed. The country in which the Khyber Pass is situated is, as we have already seen, inhabited by people who obey no law but their own wild will—in truth many of them did not hesitate to show their hostility to their nominal chief, and would willingly side against him in any disturbance, and would harm the English for no other reason than to spite him. So no wonder the Ameer was anxious about the safety of the party of English who had asked his permission to enter the Pass, knowing well that after their having done so with his permission, he would be answerable for their safety. Should any evil befall them, he would get into trouble with the English government, which was not his desire in the least.

At present, at any rate, it was his interest to keep friendly with them.

Miss Lindsay was very much amused with the appearance of the Ameer's soldiers. She had ample time to inspect them, as they all rested for half-an-hour at the Jamrood Fort. She remarked to her

father "what a very odd sort of army the Ameer must have, for there were hardly two men dressed alike."

She was right; and as far as could be seen, they all carried different sorts of weapons. Some had guns—and they were of all kinds, carbines, rifles, breech-loaders and many sorts that had been out of date for the last twenty years. Others had swords, whilst some again had rapiers, and others daggers; in fact every kind of imaginable weapon that had ever been used at all since the time of Noah I should think. Their uniforms were not worthy of the name, as they were only uniform in their persistent variety—no two men having exactly similar things on. Some were dressed in the dress of their country, sheep-skin coats, pugrees, and kummurbunds, but with pouch belts, to show they were in fighting trim. Some had old English uniforms. One man wore a cavalry frock coat covered with black braid; the next perhaps had on a scarlet infantry parade coat; another, a full dress infantry; another, undress blue cavalry coat; and another, artillery. Some even had native infantry uniforms, "karkee" and red. It would take pages to describe the great variety in their uniforms, but it was amusing to see the way they had mixed them up: with a native infantry karkee coat there would be European infantry trousers, and *vice versa*, and all sorts of mixtures of the sort. When the half hour was up,

they all remounted and formed into lines, some of the Ameer's soldiers going forward and others falling quite to the rear.

Whilst they were halting, Colonel Lindsay had been talking to his friend on Lord D——'s staff. He had left Alice with Major Munro, telling him to take care of her until he came back. Hale was standing not far off, holding his horse and smoking. He had been in the rear all the ride, whilst Miss Lindsay was in front with the Commander-in-Chief, and all the swells, as he called them. He was determined though now, to try and ride with her if possible ; so he kept close to her when the remounting and moving on began.

Colonel Lindsay was so much interested in his conversation with his friend, that his daughter seemed to slip out of his head. If he did think of her, he knew that she was safe among so many friends, so did not think it necessary to go back and look for her. He was well to the front, and they began moving before he was aware of it. There was such a crowd, too, with their own party now that they had the addition of the Ameer's, that he perforce drifted on with the stream. Major Munro rode beside Alice, with Hale behind them. When Alice and Major Munro started together she asked him if he had noticed a soldier among the Ameer's troops who looked different to the rest ; she kept on fancying, she said, that she had seen his face

before, but, of course, she knew that was impossible, as she had never before seen any Afghans except a few stray skin merchants. Major Munro answered that he had not noticed any man in particular among the Ameer's soldiers : "They all look to me so much alike in face, although their costumes are peculiar, and have variety at least to recommend them."

" You look at the man I mean when you have an opportunity. I think he is behind us. I did not see him go with those who went in front of Lord D——."

Major Munro looked round and then laughed, and said :

" Hale is behind us, riding beside one of the soldiers. Is that he ? "

" Oh, no ! He is dressed more like a native, but has a very peculiar kind of cap, which comes down under his pugree and covers all the sides of his face, only leaving his mouth, eyes, and nose visible. He has a jet black moustache, and his skin is rather fairer than the others."

" You have taken good count of him, certainly, Miss Lindsay," remarked the amused major.

" I could not help it ; he was standing in front of me between two of his comrades, and he seemed to look at me every time I looked at him. His face haunts me now."

" I must try and inspect your friend before we part company," was his reply.

They had gone the three miles and more and were well inside the Khyber now, the steep perpendicular hills rising straight up on each side like a great high wall. These mountains with their almost invisible caves are indeed natural fortresses ; and not one who now saw them, could help recalling the fate of their fellow-countrymen in that terrible massacre of 1841—how they were caught like mice in a trap.

The ground they were now treading was teeming with interest to every English heart among them ; and the military men especially could not help wishing for the good of the country that the Khyber Pass was on English territory. In the hands of English engineers what could it not be made ?

“ What a pity it does seem,” one said to the other, “ that this great Pass is not our own frontier—which is now so weak. It would then be secure, and we should have nothing to fear from any enemy, be he Turk, infidel, or Jew.” These were the thoughts, if not the words, of most who were riding quietly through this memorable Pass.

It is not intended that this tale should enter into the history or the political blunders which have been made with regard to our dealings with Afghanistan —such an attempt of necessity may be left to another and a wiser pen ; but in the humble opinion of the writer of this story the policy in many instances has been weak and vacillating, and bewildering to the Afghan ruler. A semi-barbarous prince is influenced

by deeds rather than words ; and a stern, straightforward policy is the best manner of dealing with him. To adhere to the very last letter to what has been said—no matter what the cost at the time—is the only safe way, and the way to save lives, trouble, and money in the end.

They all now came to rather a sudden turn in the road, which was at this point cut in the side of the hill and very narrow ; so they were obliged to stop and go on in a narrow column. At this juncture, Major Munro became separated from Miss Lindsay, who had fallen quite to the extreme rear. Her mare was inclined to be skittish, and went better behind the others ; so she kept back and did not go in between any horses, if she could help it. Finella had a trick of kicking every now and then, and her rider did not want to be the means of any one having a broken leg.

Just as they were turning the corner somebody in front called out something to Major Munro, which he not hearing, pushed on to ask what was said.

Miss Lindsay was now riding next to Hale, and all except the Ameer's soldiers were in front of her. They were both waiting to let all go round the corner before she moved on, as it was a nasty place should her horse kick out. They were talking to each other and were just going to move on, when a huge stone came rolling down the hill side, and fell within a yard of her horse. Had either she or her companion been

this short distance further on, he or she must have been crushed to death. It was a piece of rock that had got loose and fell, bringing down a shower of stones with it—a very common occurrence in the hills. It startled Finella dreadfully. She shied badly, and jumped down the side of the hill leaving Miss Lindsay on the path above. She had fallen off sideways, as the horse jumped down the khud.

Alice, beyond being very much frightened, and a little bruised, was not seriously hurt. Hale was terribly alarmed when he saw what had happened. He instantly jumped off his horse, slipping the bridle round his arm, and helped Miss Lindsay up, and was indeed thankful that the fall had been no worse. They both shuddered when they thought of what it might have been, for had she not fallen from the horse on to the path she might have been crushed against the side of the hill and killed. Finella had fallen on her legs, and luckily the bridle caught on a bush, so she could not run away, had she wished to do so.

All this took some time, and these two were apparently left quite alone. The soldiers of the Ameer had passed them and gone on; they did not even vouchsafe to offer any aid. The expression on their faces was stolidity and solemnity itself; just as though they had been set to a disagreeable duty and meant to fulfil it to the letter only, and show all the English people they came across, how irksome they felt it to be.

By the time Hale had brought Miss Lindsay's horse up the khud and mounted her on it, their companions were not only well out of sight but a good distance off, for he had had difficulty in leading the horse up the steep and rugged bank. His own horse was quiet and would stand and look sleepy even through a thunderstorm. He left Miss Lindsay sitting on a stone when he went down the khud. It was a pleasant position to be in and contemplate afterwards—seated on a stone, in the middle of the terrible Khyber; and how could she feel sure whether the rocks in front of which she was sitting, did not hide some armed men, and that she might not receive a chance shot in her back?

At last they were ready to start, and they turned corner after corner of the road, which wound in and out in a most serpent-like fashion. They were neither of them very easy in their own minds; it was not pleasant to be so far from their friends, and they did not know exactly what to do. If they turned back, they thought, it would only perhaps cause a sudden return of the party, as they might be missed; and would cause inconvenience to them all. Whereas if they followed on, they would soon be met should any turn back to look for them. They could not help wondering that no one did come back; but no doubt the others were all too much engaged in inspecting their own road to look round; and if they had, they could scarcely have discovered a

missing member in that large concourse, all moving by twos and threes.

“Look, Mr. Hale,” said Alice Lindsay, at last; neither had spoken for some time, “do you see the path over that hill, I am sure it is a short cut and would take us more quickly to the party in front, than going round this winding road.” They had come to rather a low grassy hill which sloped down to the road on which they were riding, and there was a trodden path up the side of it.

“I dare say it is a short cut, it looks like one, as the road turns so suddenly round that hill; but I do not think it would be safe to try it.”

“Safe! in what way do you mean, Mr. Hale? Are we more likely to be shot up there than here?”

“No, I did not mean dangerous in that way. I suppose we run as good a chance here as there. The caves up there do not look inviting, but they would hardly dare shoot at us, I should think, with so many soldiers near. I was thinking Finella might not like the steep hill, and begin her tricks.”

They had come to the bottom of the path as Hale said this, and without a word Miss Lindsay turned her horse’s head towards it, and with a touch of the whip she bounded up as if spurred to do it by his reference to her horse. Hale was of course obliged to follow: but he felt she had done a very rash thing in many ways—but it could not be helped now. The hill was steeper than it looked and

the horses could only struggle up quietly. Finella had not time to think of kicking, all her energies being given to climbing. Hale's horse was more of the hill pony stamp, and beat Finella up the hill; although in a race on the flat he would have had no chance with her.

When they reached the top and rode across the hill to the point where they hoped to find a means of descent, they were disappointed. For here it was rocky and steep, and there was no possibility of getting down, unless they had gone on their hands and knees, with a cat's facility in climbing. They rode round the hill but could not even spy their companions in the distance. These hills rise up one inside the other, as it were, and they found it very difficult to know where they were. They thought they knew their right road, but were quite mistaken, and were going in another direction altogether to the route they ought to have followed.

They rode on and on, hoping still to find the way. They were very foolish not to have turned back immediately they saw they could not rejoin the road. Miss Lindsay did nothing but beg Hale to forgive her for her rashness; she knew it was her fault going up there. Poor Hale did his best to keep up appearances, but he was getting very anxious on her account. Their mistake was becoming a serious matter; they had gone so far and now could not feel sure of the way back even: there was such a labyrinth of hills just at

this spot. They at last saw what looked like some huts in front of them ; but they felt that was poor consolation, as they did not know what sort of people they were who inhabited them. Hale had heard of the "Wuzeerees," the robber tribes who inhabited some of the hills round the Khyber, and they would fare ill should they fall into the clutches of these men.

This thought had scarcely entered his head when five men rushed out at them, frightening Miss Lindsay's horse, but she did not fall ; before they had time to speak both their bridles were seized. Hale had no weapon, and was as defenceless against these men as Miss Lindsay herself. Just as the man who had hold of Miss Lindsay's bridle was leading it away, with her on it, he received a blow on his head which stunned him for the moment, and her bridle was seized by another hand—a very fair one—and when Miss Lindsay looked at the face, she saw it was the man whose face had haunted her.

This blow paralysed all the men for a moment, as none of them had seen whence it came ; it appeared to them all as though this man had sprung out of the ground. But no such thing ; he had followed Hale and Miss Lindsay, but at a long distance, and so stealthily that they never saw him. When they seemed to him inclined to turn round, he lay on the ground or hid behind a bush or hillock ; he had left the horse he was riding at the bottom of the hill. He had followed them unseen along the

valley easily enough, as there the angles were so numerous that there were many facilities for keeping out of the way.

The soldier who had come to their rescue in this remarkable way, appeared to be dumb, for he did not utter a word, he only made signs. He kept fast hold of Miss Lindsay's bridle, who was fairly frightened now, but she tried hard not to appear so as Hale had said to her : "Look brave—don't give way; it is our only chance." She did her utmost to obey him, poor girl!

She recounted to Hale what she had said to Major Munro about this very man, and remarked how strange it was his appearing in this way, and trying to rescue her.

"I did not know he was behind me; did you?" asked he.

"No. I thought all the soldiers had gone on."

The men, having recovered from their surprise, surrounded them again, and tried to wrest Miss Lindsay's bridle from the soldier's hand; but he was apparently of a most determined character, and his decisive manner conquered, for he was allowed to walk beside her horse holding her bridle.

They had turned towards the village, talking to each other and to the soldier, who did not answer. He only shook his head, or nodded, and pointed to his mouth. They reached the huts they had seen, which proved to be a village, and were led up the

centre road to the house of the head man, as was always the custom. A great deal of talking and vociferating took place, which the dumb soldier listened to very intently. Hale and Alice Lindsay watched him very narrowly, as he seemed bent on saving them if possible, by his previous action, so they could not but regard him in the light of a would-be preserver.

After a great deal of shouting and talking had taken place, the soldier seemed suddenly to get very excited, as if he had heard something he did not like, and then looked as if a bright thought had struck him. He suddenly opened his sheepskin jacket, and began feeling for something inside his clothes, and having apparently found what he had searched for, kept it tight clutched in his hand, pushed his way through the crowd up to the man who seemed to be the one to whom all the others were talking. As soon as he reached him he made a military salute, shewed him what was in his hand. The other took it into his own hand, and looked at it closely. He had no sooner done so than his face changed, and he again addressed the people, and appeared to give some other order; and then turned to the soldier, who had now found his tongue, much to every one's astonishment. When this conversation was over, the soldier returned to where Miss Lindsay and Hale were, and said in their own tongue :

“The man has consented to let you go free.”

He had not spoken two words before Miss Lindsay said :

“ Mr. Gordon ! it is you ! ”

“ Miss Lindsay, please do not show any pleasure at seeing me ; keep quiet, and appear not to care about anything. The man may change his mind again ; there is no dependence to be placed on these people. He has allowed us all to go. I will tell you everything as soon as we are well away. I know the way and can guide you to a spot where we ought to meet the party.”

They were only too anxious to get away not to make all the haste they could ; and yet they did not dare appear to hurry, for Gordon told them they must not do so, so long as they were under the eyes of these people. They followed him and did as he did.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

As soon as they were safely out of the village, Hale exclaimed, “ Well, Gordon, you are an extraordinary fellow, to go dropping from the skies on to our heads, and frighten us out of our wits as you did—and in the guise of a soldier of his majesty, the Ameer of Cabul!—and then turn into a lost friend, and procure our release from a band of robbers, in the most magical fashion. I hardly know to whom I can compare you, as I have never heard the like before out of fairy land. A prince in a fairy tale could not have done more.”

“ We none of us can be too thankful that we have escaped, I can tell you. The people we have just left belong to the great ‘ Wuzeeree ’ tribe, and they are a desperate lot. They live by robbery, and their great aim is to try and rob the merchants as they come in from Cabul with their merchandise for India. Since I have been in these hills, I have seen a

few fights, but they only attack them openly if they are in small numbers."

"The regular merchants, I suppose, do travel in large numbers, and they are the ones that bring in those strings of camels—I mean all strung together through the nose—that one meets occasionally?"

"The Wuzeerces are such unscrupulous people; they murder a man after they have robbed him, and would have thought nothing of murdering Miss Lindsay for her earrings or brooch, had she either on."

"How fortunate that I had none on; and what should we have done had you not saved us!" exclaimed Miss Lindsay. "But how did you manage it? And why did you pretend to be dumb? And how did you come among the soldiers of the Ameer of Cabul as our escort?"

"One question at a time, please, Miss Lindsay. I think I had better tell my story from the beginning, only I will answer your first question. The charm, or whatever it was, that Mohamed Alli gave me saved us all."

"What charm do you mean? I am none the wiser now."

"I know," said Hale; "when you saved that girl and brought her to the other village, where I was, the old fellow was so grateful that, in addition to all the presents he wanted to load us with, he gave Mr. Gordon a queer little silver thing, and told him to show it and use his name whenever he was in a

difficulty. But how is it you have not made use of it before, Gordon, to save yourself?"

"It was no use to me among the people I have been with. They were friends of the old wretch, Fudjoo Khan—the father of the girl, I mean—who had vowed vengeance on us that day, and they allowed me to live to spite the murderer, whom they hate."

"What a confusion," said Alice. "I am sure I cannot understand it. It is more like a riddle than anything else. I suppose by the murderer you mean the man who murdered Major McMullin?"

"Yes. What a day that was! What I have endured since!"

Hale looked at Alice, furtively, and thought to himself that she would never forget it. Neither would she forget *this* day you may be sure; it was a happy moment for her—the one in which she again met Gordon. No words could express the delight she felt that she had come with the expedition.

They rode on in silence now, as they were anxious not to miss the party, and it was getting very late. Gordon led, threading his way in and out of the hills, and took them back into the road below, only a little further into the Pass than where they had ascended the hill. They had not long to wait before they saw the riders coming towards them.

Before they descended the hill Gordon took off his native clothes and appeared in his own—the ones he had worn the day of his capture—only keeping his

turban on. He had all his own things on underneath the others, and the close-fitting cap he had only worn to hide his fair hair and keep up the disguise. When the party rode up he passed among the soldiers as a European ; they did not recognise him in his present costume. When Colonel Lindsay and Major Munro reached the little group, Alice called out, "Here is my soldier, Major Munro ; what do you think of him ?"

"Why, it is Gordon !" exclaimed the colonel and major, together ; "only with a black moustache. But that is easily accounted for. Where did you spring from, Gordon ?"

The news of Gordon's reappearance flew quickly down the line, and great was the excitement that prevailed. The Chief told Colonel Lindsay that he should like Mr. Gordon to ride with him and tell him his story as soon as they got out of the Pass, which he did. Alice and her father rode on the other side of him, and heard it all with the deepest interest we may be sure ; as indeed we may that her cup of happiness was nearly full.

The great joy of this day made up to her for all the intense misery of the other, and for the time that had passed since.

Gordon's story is told in a few words, as we already know that he was taken to a village among the Khyber hills ; he was kept a prisoner there, and made to work like any coolie night. He ever watched

for a chance of escape, but none presented itself, until one day an order came to the head man of the village in which he was, to send some armed men to join others from neighbouring villages to form the escort for Lord D—— and the party of English who were coming into the Khyber Pass. Gordon had picked up enough Pushto to understand the order, and he was determined now to escape in some way or other ; but how to do so he knew not, and lay awake half the night thinking of it and forming all kinds of plans, only to be discarded. With the morning light a really feasible way struck him ; which was, to disguise himself as a soldier and go with the others, for when he was once safely with the English, he could declare himself. He hardly dared then, he said, to think this plan would succeed, as he was watched so narrowly. One of the men who had been chosen to go was a friend of his—at least he had been kinder to him than any one else, and he had himself done him many good turns since he had been in the village. He was a carpenter by trade, and Gordon, knowing something about it, had often helped him to finish a piece of work.

He made up his mind to try and get this man to let him take his place ; he was about his own height and size, and in that way would do very well, and if he dyed his moustache no one would discover him. They were to start in the dusk of the evening—that was fortunate for him—and were to sleep at Jamrood, so as to be ready and waiting for the

English people when they arrived the next morning. He had to proceed very cautiously in this scheme, not to excite the suspicion of the others. He had a little difficulty in making the man understand what he wanted ; he demurred too, at first, but when Gordon promised to give him his ring, watch-chain, and a sovereign, he consented. It was a large bribe for a poor man, but nothing to Gordon as compared with his freedom. As he had always worn his watch inside, no one knew he had one ; otherwise he would not have possessed it now. The chain and money were too large a bribe for the man to resist, so he consented to help him, and he kept his word. He gave him a gun—very rusty and old, certainly—and a fur cap to hide his fair hair. Up to the time of his escape Gordon was in a great fright for fear of detection, but when the time came, the darkness and his pretending to be dumb enabled him to escape detection. The rest of the story we know.

Great was the rejoicing in the regiment when the party returned, bringing back the long-lost Gordon. He was quite a hero for a long time, and much was made of him.

The Commander-in-Chief gave a dinner-party the next night in honour of the mutual escape of the three ; for Alice Lindsay and Mr. Hale had been in great danger, although, not known at the time to the others of the expedition. They had only just been missed when they were met. This was accounted

for by the narrow winding road they were traversing, which thus happily prevented anxiety and confusion being caused on their account. The consternation of all the party would have been great had it happened differently. As it was, they were all thoroughly surprised to find that two of their party had been in such imminent peril all the time they had been riding peaceably and quietly up the Khyber Pass; and added to this feeling was that of astonishment at the reappearance of the long-lost Gordon. It was quite a romance that Gordon should be found in this way; and at the same time be the means of saving Miss Lindsay and Hale.

Lord D—— sent for Colonel Lindsay the next day and told him privately that he would do anything he could for Mr. Gordon, and if he would pass into the staff corps he would give him an appointment in a Bengal cavalry regiment if he would like to join that service.

The colonel had a long talk with Gordon, and it ended in his following his advice, which was to accept the Chief's offer. Gordon had no small struggle with himself before he could make up his mind to do so, as he dearly loved his regiment and did not wish to leave it. But as the colonel wisely pointed out to him, that service without private means in a queen's regiment was but a poor means of living, and in the staff corps he would get good pay if in a regiment, he agreed to accept the offer.

When this talk was over, he turned and said, "Colonel, I have something to say to you."

The colonel, of course thought it had something to do with his previous conversation ; but no ! the young man actually told him he was in love with his daughter, and asked his consent to their marriage should the young lady herself accept him. Colonel Lindsay was amazed, for he had never thought of Gordon as a marrying man ; but now he came to reflect on the matter, he remembered many little things which he had not taken much notice of at the time. He did exclaim "A small request truly ; to ask me to give you my only daughter ; but I will say there is not a man I know to whom I would rather give her than to you. But are you sure the young lady herself will agree to become the wife of a poor soldier ?"

This he said with a merry twinkle in his eye ; for in his own mind he knew there would be no difficulty on that score. For he loved his daughter too well not to have seen that she had felt Gordon's disappearance, although she had, as she thought, hidden all her feelings in the depths of her own true and loving heart. Colonel Lindsay also told Gordon that he could not so easily have agreed to their marriage if he had not promised to go into the staff corps ; as on his present pay it would be impossible for them to live comfortably. Gordon acknowledged that had it not been for the hope of winning

Miss Lindsay for his wife, he would not have agreed to leave his beloved regiment ; and even now dreaded the thought of doing so.

Mrs. Lindsay's maternal anxiety inclined her to disapprove. Indeed she might well have looked that her daughter should make a more brilliant match ; but she was too fond a mother to say a word against it, when she saw her daughter's happiness would be very deeply affected by a refusal.

We all know, without being told, what Alice said ; and we need not here sing the song of a love story, which is too well known and too common to be gone through now. It is an old, old song and one that will be sung until the end of the world. Charles Gordon and Alice Lindsay were supremely happy ; the dark cloud which had hung over her for so long, had at last discovered to her its silver lining, all the brighter for the preceding darkness.

General satisfaction was expressed by all at the turn affairs had taken, and the story was romantic enough to afford food for conversation in Peshawur during the whole of the coming hot season, and would possibly help to banish the unceasing "weather topic." The only thing that caused discontent was the idea of losing ~~Gordon~~ from the regiment. This he felt himself, poor fellow, terribly ; but nevertheless he studied hard at the languages, as the "goal" for which he was striving could not be gained until he had passed and received an appointment in accord-

ance with the Chief's promise. He was not to be married till then.

Just after he had passed and was put in orders for the second squadron subalternship of the — cavalry a rich uncle died and left him enough to live upon in his own regiment. Gordon could from his heart echo :—

“ Sweet is a legacy and passing sweet
The unexpected death of some old lady
Or gentleman of seventy years complete.”

This old uncle had heard of the Khyber adventure ; and in consequence becoming uncommonly proud of his nephew, had immediately remembered him in his will, but he only put him in just in time, as he died immediately after.

No allusion has been made to the race meeting, which did come off just before the “memorable ride ;” but there was a great want of spirit about it, owing partly, perhaps, to poor Gordon’s—at that time—unknown fate. He had always been a steward, and an active one, at previous race meetings. Many horrors too had at the time been so recently enacted, that there was a kind of gloom over the place, and people did not feel in sufficient spirits to enjoy the races ; and many kept away from them. Charles Gordon’s *Waler*, “Plutarch,” was entered for the “race for *Walers* for stakes only,” and won easily. The horse was trained and entered for the race by

Robert Hale, who thought that if Gordon did turn up at some future time, he would like to know that his horse had been entered, and that some trouble had been taken for him in his absence. The "bracelet race" fell through owing to a want of sufficient entries for it. Miss Lindsay at the time did not feel inclined to go to the races. Poor girl! can any one wonder, with so much secret sorrow gnawing at her heart? She did not, therefore, allow "Finella" to be entered. Mrs. Townley was grievously disappointed at the failure of this race, as she was so eager for it, and had determined apparently to win, by the pains she took with her horse, and the regularity with which she gave him his daily gallop round the course. It is doubtful however if her horse would have won, for "Finella" appeared to have the better chance.

Everything now promised well for Charles Gordon's and Alice Lindsay's future happiness. They were married in the hills at Murree, and paid a visit to Cashmere for their wedding tour. They did not again return to Peshawur as the 139th regiment marched down country the next cold weather.

It was, I need hardly say, a very great happiness to the Lindsays to keep their daughter always near them, and to feel that when they returned with their regiment to dear old England, she and her husband would not be left behind.

Mr. Fuller was married to Miss Carter when he

was made adjutant of the 120th N. I., and they remained in Peshawur two years. Colonel Carter gave up the command of the Shubkuddur Fort after his daughter's marriage, as he said, "He could not exist in that hole alone." He was added to the list of the "faltoo" colonels at Peshawur, and was very happy and comfortable as such. Miss O'Dowd and Mr. Brown too, were eventually married, and very happily as it proved.

Poor Mr. and Mrs. Ford were obliged to leave Peshawur, as they were shot at more than once in the dusk of the evening, as they were returning home from their drive. Their friends persuaded them not to remain, as it was clear their lives would never be safe again in Peshawur.

Mr. Hale bore Alice's marriage to Gordon as bravely as we should expect him to do, and always remained their staunch and true friend.

And thus having reached the spring once more, the season in which our story began ; our "Year in Peshawur" may fitly end, with the wish that all our friends there may be happy and prosperous.

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